

HARRY HARSON;

OR,

THE BENEVOLENT BACHELOR.

BY

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(NEPHEW OF WASHINGTON IRVING.)



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P R E F A C E.

THE date of the following tale is fixed many years back, and since then great and important changes have been made in the law of this State. Imprisonment for debt has been abolished, and many forms and proceedings which are alluded to in these pages have been swept away by statutory enactment.

The whole body of law and practice has been simplified and remodelled; but whether it has been improved is a matter of no little discussion, both by the bar and bench; which discussion probably will not terminate until all those who are familiar with the old forms and usages shall have ceased to frequent their former haunts, or have gone to their graves.

The characters who figure in this book are not all fictitious. Some are still living; but the greater portion of them have played their part in life, and the curtain has fallen, and shut out all that the world ever has known or ever will know of their foibles or their virtues. Many of the scenes, too, are real, and for a time made a deep and painful impression upon the public mind; but the waves of time have rolled on, and effaced them from the memories of all except a few whom they still haunt with a lingering feeling of pain.

J. T. I.

HARRY HARRISON.

CHAPTER I.

THERE is a portion of the great city of New-York known to many who move in the upper walks of life, only by name; a region rife with crime and suffering and violence. Surrounded by broad thoroughfares, with wide streets crossing within a few hundred yards of it, and with all the life and bustle of a mighty metropolis humming within its very skirts, it stands a doomed spot; the haunt of the felon and the thief. Few visit it from choice. Those who casually stray within its precincts, hasten on with quickened step and anxious eye, glad to get beyond it, and out of the reach of those who prowl through its narrow streets. Houses, ruined and toppling down; doors unhung, or swinging open for any one to enter who may choose; roofs sagging down, or crushed in by falling chimneys; shutterless and unglazed windows; deep dark areas, half filled with rubbish; basements with dripping and mildewed walls; buildings crowded together, falling and tumbling one on the other, and yet supported, one can scarcely tell how, meet the eye in every direction. And yet every thing is swarming with life. Human beings, savage, reckless, dissolute, mad with drink

bloated, with blood-shot eyes and shaggy hair, next of kin to beasts, herd here in droves; festering and dying by scores, and yet never thinning their countless multitudes. Every house is a hive; every house is a lazar-house; every house, a brothel; and every house a den where theft and violence and murder find fit harborage.

Yet upon this spot, on the morning in which it is presented to the reader, rose as glorious a sun as ever shone; and along those narrow, pent-up streets, through those crumbling dwellings, floated as cool and fresh an atmosphere — contaminated indeed by the stews around it — as ever was breathed. In a dark cellar, reeking with noisome exhalations and stagnant vapors; through a small shattered window, begrimed with dirt and filth, broke the glad light of that morning sun; giving something like cheerfulness to the murkiest and most dreary den that ever human being tenanted. It might have been a deserted wine-vault; for there were empty casks piled away in dim corners of it; or it might have been a long-unused place for the storage of merchandise; for broken boxes, on which were scrawled the names of firms long since bankrupt, covered with dirt and mildew, were heaped up in other parts of it; or it might have been the haunt of some grubbing, accumulating pawnbroker; for old clothes, chairs, pans and kettles, tables, and every thing which either man could dream of or thief steal, were gathered there, tossed recklessly about, and all rotting and falling to pieces from dampness.

In this fated place, in front of a dull, smouldering fire, which she from time to time furnished with fuel, sat a woman of sixty. Her features were wan and haggard; her blue eye so pale and lustreless that it might have stared from the livid lid of a corpse; and her gray hair, long and angled, escaping from beneath a crumpled hat of faded

black velvet, hung over her shoulders. A tattered cloak was drawn tightly about her, partly to keep out the cold, and partly to hide the rags beneath.

Near her, shivering with cold and terror, were two children, a boy and girl, watching her looks, and shrinking back whenever she moved, as if in momentary dread of violence. Strange tenants they were of such a place; for they were singularly beautiful; exotics which could never have been the growth of such a soil. The boy might have been seven years old, the girl younger; but suffering had crushed them down; and beautiful though they were, they bore a blight which God never sheds on childhood. The sight of these children seemed to be a source of high gratification to the old lady just mentioned; for as often as she turned to look at them, she gave vent to a low chuckling laugh, and shook her head at the fire, grinning and rubbing her hands together; or hugging her knees with an appearance of great satisfaction.

How long she might have indulged in her pleasant mood, is a matter of some uncertainty; for suddenly a long stream of sunlight floated into the room, like a messenger of joy, and falling upon her shrunken face, seemed to recall her from her day-dream. 'There comes the sun!' muttered she, starting to her feet; 'there he comes! there he comes! Work, work, work! Up with ye! Bundle up! Up with ye!'

In obedience to this summons, from every part of the room; from behind casks, from beneath boxes, and piles of rags and rubbish and filth, where they had lain unobserved before, there swarmed a crowd of human beings. Children, kenneled there like beasts, gathered about Mrs. Blossom; wan, miserable little wretches, with blear eyes, thin, pale faces, crippled, deformed, blighted; and, even in the days of

infancy, with the decrepitude and infirmity of years upon them. There was a glad hum among them; for they were to exchange the pent-up, stagnant air of their home for the light of day, the blue sky, and the gay sunshine.

‘Are ye all here?’ said Mrs. Blossom, running her eye over them to see that none had eloped during the night. ‘All right — eleven. Come here, Squink!’ said she to a sickly-looking boy: ‘where was you yesterday?’

‘In Broadway,’ replied the boy.

‘So you was; and the day afore, and the day afore that. You’re gettin’ common in Broadway; you must take Hudson-street. Go it strong in the Square; there’s ladies there, and they’m uncommon tender about the bosom. Stop!’ said she, as the boy was going off; ‘who had the orphan sister yesterday?’

‘I brothered her yesterday; and blow me if it’s my turn to do it ag’in to-day,’ replied a small boy with a stout voice, and sufficiently ragged to have brothered all the orphan sisters in the world, without being much reduced in circumstances.

‘Stop, Squink!’ said the woman; ‘take her along — here she is.’ As she spoke, she placed in his arms a child a few months old. ‘My eyes! what a babby that is! She grows fat, in spite of me; but her weak eyes are a perfect fortune to me; at least five shillings a day,’ continued she, lapsing into an abstruse mathematical calculation, and counting her fingers. ‘Well, well; off with you, Squink! off with you!’

The boy, casting a rueful glance at the child, took her up in his arms, and staggered out of the cellar. -

‘Betty! here, Betty! you take the Bowery. Tell the old story: ‘a mother; a hard-working woman, with ten children,’ and all that. Be off! And you,’ said she, turning to a pale, unhealthy girl, who stood next her; ‘you go about

Washington-square, and Bond-street, and them 'ere parts; look melancholy at the ladies in the winders; drop down on the steps, completely did up. That always brings two shillings. And you,' said she, addressing the small boy with stout voice, 'you must be among the merchants' clerks. Talk big; look sassy; ax 'em for a dollar; swear at 'em: they likes that. You take?'

'Don't I? I'm up to trap!' said the boy, and out he darted.

Having at last sent her whole crew adrift, with the exception of the boy and girl first mentioned, the woman sat down. She had scarcely done so, when the cellar was darkened by the entrance of a man, who walked in as if perfectly at home; and drawing the end of a wooden box to the fire, and seating himself on it, took up a bar of iron which lay there as a substitute for both shovel and tongs, and began to stir the fire.

'Bloody poor fires you keep, Mrs. Blossom; bloody poor!' said the man, still poking in the ashes.

'Times is hard, very hard, Mr. Snork,' replied Mrs. Blossom, shaking her head pathetically; 'and poor souls like me must suffer. Ah! if it was n't for the lambs under my charge, I really *do* think I'd have no fire at all.'

Mr. Snork laid down the iron bar, and placing a hand on each knee, stared at her in undisguised amazement. At last he said:

'Live in this 'ere place without a fire?'

Mrs. Blossom shook her head, as much as to say, that melancholy as the fact might be, nevertheless such had been the tenor of her observation.

'Then I'm blessed if you would n't be mouldy afore a week's out! Pah! I can feel it sticking to me now!' And to show that his remark was made in earnest, and that he

was really sincere in his apprehensions, he shook himself violently, by way of dislodging all particles which might have adhered to his person. Mrs. Blossom made no reply for some time; but at length she inquired:

‘How’s *your* set, Mr. Snork?’

‘Pretty well, pretty well. We’ve got the measles among ’em; but as it’s among the healthy ones, it’s all the better. It makes ’em look interesting. They take uncommon with women as has got babbies of their own; or as has lately lost a little ’un. Our sickliest child like to went off last week; the profitablest child we’ve got. Mrs. Snork took onbounded pains in the training of that child. Mrs. Snork is a very valuable woman, for one of the profession. She turns out the successfulest beggars in the city. To turn out a well-broken one is not so easy a job. They’re wonderful scarce; not one in ten succeeds: and we have to keep gettin’ and gettin’, to make up for the wear and tear of the police-office and House of Refuge. It costs us at least one a month; and when they comes out of the House of Refuge, they’m too big for the profession, and prefers stealin’. But what’s them?’ said Mr. Snork, taking off his hat and rubbing his forehead very hard with the cuff of his coat. ‘What’s them? I never seed them afore.’ He looked very earnestly at the two children, who shrank from him, drawing together, and watching him with terrified eyes. ‘My eyes! Mrs. Blossom, they’m great ones! Where did they come from?’

‘Never mind,’ said the woman; ‘that’s *my* affair.’

‘Will you sell one?’ inquired the man, still staring eagerly at them. ‘I’d give a round price for the gal—I would indeed;’ and by way of impressing his sincerity more strongly upon Mrs. Blossom, he dashed his hat to the floor, and blasted his eyes if he were not in earnest.

‘It’s no use, Mr. Snork,’ said the woman; ‘we knows her

wayly. A child like that there one is worth a dollar a day. Look at her p'int. If she had been a cripple, she 'd been worth twice the money at the very lowest.'

'A wery delightful cripple she 'd make,' said Mr. Snork admiringly; 'but you won't sell her?' said he inquiringly.

Mrs. Blossom shook her head.

'Nor the boy nuther?' asked he. 'He does n't seem equal to the gal!

Again Mrs. Blossom shook her head. 'Money won't buy them, Mr. Snork,' said she resolutely; 'beside,' added she, sinking her voice and looking cautiously about her, 'there's more in them children than you or I see — more than you or I know. I could n't let them go if I wanted to; and if you had 'em, you 'd be sorry for it.'

'Hallo! what's in the wind now?' exclaimed Mr. Snork, sitting bolt upright, and staring earnestly at her.

Mrs. Blossom shook her head ominously, but said nothing farther, and Mr. Snork, after several ineffectual attempts to satisfy his curiosity, rose from his seat and went to the door.

Before he ascended the steps, Mrs. Blossom got up, and taking him by the arm, led him to a distant corner of the cellar and stood for some time whispering in his ear, and pointing to the children. Mr. Snork seemed to differ from her in opinion; for at every pause he shook his head, and when he had heard her out, confirmed all his previous marks of disapprobation by striking his fist against an empty box, and declaring that if he did, he 'hoped he might be d —— d!'

After this free and earnest expression of his sentiments, he walked out, without farther remark.

Scarcely had Mr. Snork made his egress before the doorway was again darkened by the entrance of a visitor of altogether a different description. As far as could be seen of

his face, which was muffled as if for the purpose of concealment, he appeared to be in the prime of life. The little of the hair which escaped from beneath his hat was jet black slightly mixed with gray — but the shaggy eye-brows overhanging two eyes as black and glowing as those of a serpent, and the thin, sallow face, crossed and seamed with wrinkles, gave him the appearance of much greater age, and showed that care or trouble or evil passions had made wild work with features which had once been good.

Mrs. Blossom, probably supposing the new comer to be Mr. Snork returning to deliver some forgotten message, did not look up until her visitor, dropping his cloak, uttered her name.

Starting from her seat, with an air of deep deference not unmingled with fear, she exclaimed : ‘Is it you, Sir ? Mr. — Mr. — Mr. —’

‘Mr. what ?’ interrogated the man sharply. ‘Mr. who ? Have you learned my name yet ?’

The woman shook her head.

‘It’s well for you,’ said he savagely. ‘I have no name ; and least of all a name here, and for you.’

‘Ah, I forgot, I forgot — I’m very old, very old,’ whined Mrs. Blossom.

‘Those who deal with me must never forget,’ returned the man in the same stern tone, ‘or they’ll rue it. And the children ?’ inquired he abruptly.

Mrs. Blossom made no other reply than to point to the boy and girl, who had shrunk off to a far corner of the room as if for concealment.

Her visitor, who had not before observed them, lifted his cloak so as to conceal all of his features except his eyes, and walked across to where they were. Whatever might have been his thoughts or feelings, not a word escaped him

but as he looked at them, the children instinctively crouched back into the dark recesses of the place, to escape the glowing eye that rested on them.

‘You have done your work well,’ said he, returning to Mrs. Blossom, ‘very well. Keep on as you have begun, and you will earn your reward ; but recollect one thing — if you fail ; if you break faith with me ——’

He did not finish the sentence, but shook his thin finger at her with a gesture full of menace.

‘And now,’ added he, ‘another question — you know the man whom I send here ?’

Mrs. Blossom was too completely awed by the presence of her visitor, who evidently had some strong hold upon her fears, to make any other reply than a simple assent.

‘And his name ?’ inquired the man sharply.

If Mrs. Blossom had attained that knowledge she had too much shrewdness to admit it, for she denied it boldly.

‘It’s well,’ said the other, ‘do n’t learn it, and do n’t seek to learn it. You owe him thanks for sending me to you — and now mark my words well. When that man comes to you, do his bidding, blindly, without question, and,’ added he in a cold, slow tone, speaking through his closed teeth, ‘without conscience.’

‘I’ll do as he says,’ replied Mrs. Blossom, somewhat sullenly, ‘but he’s a hard man — he’s a very hard man.’

‘Do his bidding,’ replied the other sternly, ‘without cavil. And above all,’ added he, pointing to the children, ‘look to them.’

The whole conversation had been carried on in a low tone, but he added a few words more almost in a whisper, and left the place.

It was evident that Mrs. Blossom was not a little relieved by the departure of her guest, and it was also evident from

the anxious glances which she continued from time to time to cast toward the entrance, that she had some apprehensions that he might return — but he did not; and after watching for some time she again seated herself at the fire, and resting her chin on her hand, seemed buried in deep thought, until the faint chimes of a distant clock, striking the hour, reached her ear. Springing up, she turned to the children and said: 'It's time you were at work. You've lived here long enough without earning your wittals. You stay here,' said she to the boy, 'and *you*,' she added, addressing the girl, 'come along.'

As she spoke, she took up a small ragged bonnet, threw it to her, and without waiting till she had put it on, led her into the street.

Through several narrow alleys, dark and dingy even in the light of day, the old woman led the child, until they emerged into a broad thoroughfare. Then giving directions to her how to act, and what to say, and how to mislead those who questioned her; and cautioning her above all not to tell that the old woman who was dogging her footsteps was other than a stranger; she bade her commence her task. Walking off so far that none would suspect her of having any communication with the child, she watched her success with greedy eyes.

What a glorious launch in life was that! A child, as yet pure-hearted, young, helpless, cowed and broken-spirited, flung into the streets to commence a career, the whole course of which is suffering, and its end infamy and despair! From morning till night that feeble girl dragged her weary limbs through the street; begging, now of one person, now of another; and ever was the cold, calculating eye of that old woman upon her. Some gave her a few pence; some

spoke harshly to her ; and some passed on, without hearing the faint voice which sighed out its petition in their ears. One stout gentleman, with a mulberry nose, and a mahogany cane under his arm, asked her in a stern voice if she knew that there was a law against vagrants, and that there was a place called the ' House of Refuge.' If she did n't, he rather suspected that she *would* attain that knowledge shortly. Saying which, he smiled to himself, as if pleased with his own remark, and looked complacently about him, as if in hopes that some one else had heard it too. But as no one else other had been so fortunate, he was forced to content himself with his own approbation, and walked off.

On the child went. Once or twice she sat down on a stone step to rest, but the old woman came up and forced her on. Young as she was, a vague idea of flight passed through her mind ; but she had no where to go ; and, miserable as it was, she had no other home than the wretched hole from which she had emerged that morning. Again and again the idea of escape passed through her mind ; but then she thought of her little brother, left behind in that dreary den, and that she might never see him again : and the tears came in her eyes, and her heart leaped into her throat, and she made up her mind that she would not attempt it. But then again came the thought of that dreaded woman. The very sight of her made her tremble. She looked back to see if she were still there ; the velvet hat was not in sight ; for the first time that day, Mrs. Blossom's eye was off her. For one single moment she hesitated, and then, scarcely conscious of the impulse that urged her on, she sprang forward and fled at full speed along the street. The next instant she heard the voice of the old woman calling her ; then she lost it ; and on she

went. The darkness of the evening favored her ; and after turning several corners, she saw the door of a house open ; and darting across a small court-yard which intervened between her and the house, she sprang in, and fell exhausted on the floor.

CHAPTER II.

IN the upper part of the city, at the date of this narrative, there stood, and possibly still stands, a little back from the street, a wooden house, somewhat the worse for age, but still in good repair. It once had been yellow, but had faded off into a tawny brown; and here and there the gray color of the wood showed through. It was two stories high, with tall arched windows, and a double-pitch to its roof: yet it was a snug-looking place, with a wide, comfortable entrance, and wooden seats on each side of the door, as if encouraging the weary to rest there. A wooden railing served to separate a door-yard from the street, and to enclose a huge willow-tree, some of whose limbs hung over the house, trailing upon its roof, while others, drooping almost to the ground, shaded the porch.

This house and its guardian tree had once been far out of town; and the time had been when all about it were green fields, here and there dotted with gardens. Trees were plenty about there then; and there were no neighbors within half a mile. The house had been a great affair in those days; a sort of second-rate villa, whose owner sat during the fine summer afternoons on the wide seat at the porch, with his pipe in his mouth and two or three cronies at his elbow, or dozed under the shade of the trees, lulled by the wind as it whispered through their branches. But one by one they had died off; until of all the trees which had overshadowed that door-yard this single old willow was left; and this too was going fast; for here and there a long dry branch, stretching out like a palsied limb, showed that decay was at

work within. Such the spot had been ; but the city had gradually stolen around it, until the old house, awakening as it were from a dream of years, found itself quite an insignificant member of a long street, with a tall brick building opposite staring it full in the face, and one on each side jammed close up against it, and looking down with sovereign contempt upon their rustic neighbor. And the tree too, which had flaunted its long limbs hither and thither, streaming them out in the wind with a most aristocratic indifference to the space it occupied, found itself cramped up between two high walls, and obliged, as the phrase goes, 'to haul in its horns.'

The entrance to the house was nearly on a level with the street ; and the door opened immediately into a room, without the aid or intervention of passage or entry. A flagged pathway led from the gate to the door ; but all the rest of the court-yard was sodded with turf ; and from the midst of this, shot up the old tree just mentioned. These, and many other peculiarities of the place, were observable in the day-time ; though they might have escaped the observation of even an accurate observer at the time when we introduce it to the reader, which was just as the last lingering rays of an afternoon's sun were deepening into twilight, on the very day in which Mrs. Blossom had left her house with the praiseworthy intention of initiating the child under her charge, into all the little enjoyments incident to a life of beggary.

In this house, in a back room on the ground-floor, sat a man of about sixty, smoking a pipe in front of a bright fire of wood, which burnt and crackled merrily, its blaze dancing high up the chimney, and flickering hither and thither, lighting up the room, and shining full on the quiet, good-humored face of the old man, giving it such a comfortable,

cosy, cheerful look, that one would have sworn to his honesty and warmth of heart, from that single sample of his person.

He was a sturdy old fellow, very broad in the skirt and shoulder, with a full, round face, and as glad an eye as ever danced in a man's head. It was a snug, comfortable room, too, with plain but substantial furniture, and one or two wide chairs, either meant for the old man's peculiar use, or the accommodation of an equally broad-skirted friend or two. At his elbow stood a small wooden table, on which was a mug of hot toddy, from which he occasionally refreshed himself, and an old newspaper, intended to furnish the same entertainment for his mind that the mug did for his body. Ever and anon, as he took a sip from his mug, or drew a whiff from his pipe, he cast a meditative glance at the fire, or looked up at a small clock which ticked loudly over the mantel-piece, wagging a short tail of a pendulum with unbounded activity, as if in a great hurry to get through the evening.

Opposite him, in a chair as capacious as his own, sat a small irascible looking pug-dog with a wrinkled nose. The whole of his back and the upper part of his head were of a light brown, but toward the end of his nose his face gradually deepened into a jet-black; giving him the appearance of a dog who had been engaged in investigating the interior of an ink-bottle. Yet, with all his disadvantages of complexion, he was a tidy, tight-skinned animal; and as he sat opposite his master, displaying to all advantage a streak of white which ran down his breast between his fore-legs, he bore a strong resemblance to a respectable negro clergyman, clad in snuff-colored small clothes, with an ample shirt-ruffle.

'You're a good dog, Spite, indeed you are!' said the old man, pausing in his smoking, and looking kindly at his companion. 'You're a little irritable and cross-grained;

but you're growing old: we're both growing old, Spite; we're both growing old, and must humor each other. We know each other's whims, my poor dog, and must make allowance for them.' As he spoke, the old man, at some inconvenience to himself, leaned forward and patted the dog on the head.

Spite acknowledged the courtesy by a short bark, expressive of high satisfaction. He would have wagged his tail, but that appendage being always in tight curl upon his back, it was an understood thing between him and his master, that wagging it was out of the question.

Scarcely had HARRY HARSON (for that was the old man's name) resumed his pipe and paper, when Spite broke out into a sudden and vociferous bark, looking keenly at the door. The cause of this outcry was explained by a heavy step in the ante-chamber, a fumbling at the knob of the door, a muttered exclamation of impatience at delay in finding it, a violent flinging open of the door, and the abrupt entrance of a short, broad-shouldered man, in a loose great-coat, with iron-gray hair, black glowing eyes, and a dark complexion, somewhat ruddy from exposure. Without speaking, he placed his hat on the table, went to the chair occupied by the dog, ejected him without the least regard to a remonstrance made by that worthy animal; took a seat, stretched his feet to the fire, and drove both hands to the very bottom of his breeches' pockets, where he clenched them with a kind of sullen ferocity, and looked very hard at the small clock over the fire-place. After maintaining this attitude for some moments, he turned to Harry Harson, who had kept on smoking without uttering a word: 'I wish I was dead!' said he.

Harson drew a few whiffs of his pipe, and took a drink of toddy; but made no reply.

'I say, I wish I was dead!' repeated his visitor more emphatically, drawing his hands out of his pockets, and placing a palm on each knee, with his elbows a-kimbo. At the same time, he looked Harry Harrison full in the face.

'Why, what's the matter, Frank?' said Harrison, taking his pipe from his mouth, and placing it on the table. 'What troubles you?'

'Every thing troubles me!' replied the other, with increasing warmth. 'This world is n't worth living in; and I'm a nigger, Sir; positively a nigger. I've no time of my own, Sir; was up all night with a child in convulsions. At eight o'clock this morning was called to see a woman die of small-pox; was called from there to pump out the stomach of a drunken beast who had swallowed laudanum; had just got through, when I was called to a consultation, whether it was best to blister the head or seat of a gentleman with some other complaint. After that, found on my slate a memorandum from an old woman troubled with flatulency, who swore it was inflammation of the bowels. Left her to visit a child who had swallowed a cent in play; and got home just in time to receive a polite note, informing me that a bill of ten dollars which I had sent to the Corporation, for sewing up the throat of a man who had cut it in the Tombs, had been reduced by the Committee on Retrenchment to five! I wish I was dead! If I don't, damme!' And by way of verifying what he said, he slapped his hand violently on his own knee. 'Sir, I'm sick of being a doctor. I'm sick of being a man! I wish I was that infernal ugly, asthmatic, pop-eyed, black-nosed, cross-grained, pug-dog of yours! I'd sooner be *that* than a man. I would, I swear!'

'Spite is a very good little dog,' said Harry, mildly, looking kindly at his favorite. 'He's very inoffensive.'

'Well, he may be,' said the Doctor; 'but he's cursed

ugly; but he's better than a doctor. Sew up a man's throat for five dollars, Sir! Think of *that*! Only let me have the sewing up of the throat of one of that Committee on Retrenchment, that's all! I'll stitch it straight through the neck, in one side and out the other. If I do n't, damme!

'Come, come, my old fellow; do n't be in a passion,' said Harson, going to the fire, and taking up a pitcher which stood there. 'Here's something to comfort you. I've kept it hot for you. You do n't see stuff like that every day.'

'I'm not in a passion,' replied his visitor, without attending to the latter part of his remark, 'I swear I'm not. Curse it, Sir, do n't say I'm in a passion; I hate to be told I'm in a passion; I never was cooler in all my life.' Which last assertion, if true, certainly showed that his ordinary degree of temperature was a high one.

'Well, well, drink your toddy,' said Harson, holding up the pitcher, and pouring some of its contents into a mug similar to his own; 'and do n't try to pick a quarrel with me.'

The Doctor looked at him without speaking. At first his eye glowed; but as it rested on the mild face of the old man, who stood opposite to him filling his pipe, it encountered something there which could not be withstood. Its expression gradually softened; and, at length, when Harson looked up, and pushed the mug toward him, and handed him his pipe, and their eyes met, there was something very like a tear in the Doctor's, as he said:

'What, Harry! my old boy, quarrel with you! I'd tear my tongue out first! Friends are not scattered so plentifully along the road-side of life, that a man can fling them off like worn-out clothes. Some find that out young; but all find

it out before they go to their graves, if they live to grow old.'

'So they do, Frank; so they do! God help those who have none!

The old man grasped the hand which was now stretched out to meet his, and their little difference was forgotten. For some moments both smoked their pipes in silence, as if engaged in moralizing over the last remark. Their silence, however, was of short duration; for the dog suddenly started up; uttered a short, sharp, yelping bark; looked fiercely at the door, and then cast a suggestive glance at his master, as if to say: 'My old fellow, there's something there which had better be looked to.'

Harry Harson was too busy with his own thoughts to pay much attention to the dog; nor was it until the outcry of that respectable animal, incensed at his suggestion being slighted, became exceedingly vehement, that he started up and said: "'Od rot it, pup! what ails you?' The dog turned an indignant eye upon his master, and then looked at the door. At the same time, a sound came from the outer room, not unlike a low, stifled cry.

'God bless me! Frank,' exclaimed the old man, starting forward, 'I *do* believe the dog's right. There must be some one there.' He paused, and listened; but the sound was not repeated. 'I certainly *did* hear something,' said he; 'I'll see to it.' Saying this, he threw open the door so as to admit the light into the room which adjoined the street, and hurried out. In a few moments he returned, bearing in his arms something which looked like a bundle of rags. Going to the light, he sat down, and as he did so he raised his arm, and a long mass of bright golden hair fell back across it, revealing the pale, wasted face of a little girl, scarcely six years of age. How beautiful that face was! how sadly

beautiful ! for amid all the freshness of childhood there was a look of care, as if old age had prematurely crept into her bosom and placed its stamp upon her heart.

‘A child ! a mere child !’ said the old man, as he passed his hand through her hair ; ‘a poor, half-starved, broken-down little child : get some water, Frank,’ said he to his crony, who stood twisting his fingers together, and thrusting his hands in his pockets and drawing them out again with great energy, as if infected with a strong inclination to perform some action, the nature of which he had not yet ascertained.

‘Give her some wine !’ exclaimed he, suddenly. ‘Where is it ?’

‘In the cupboard, on the top shelf. Quick, Frank ! Poor little thing ! how thin she is !’

Frank rushed to the cupboard ; seized the bottle with both hands, and attempted to draw the cork with his teeth ; failing in this, he snatched up a knife, and with the back of it struck off the neck of the bottle at a blow, and dashed part of its contents into a tumbler.

Spite, equally excited, sprang upon a table, and with his legs wide apart, to give himself a firm footing, closed both eyes, and pointing his nose to the ceiling, barked vociferously.

Pausing every few moments to clear his throat, the Doctor, in good earnest, set about restoring his unexpected patient ; and it was not long before her eyes opened, and she became aware of what had passed.

Harry Harson was not the man to leave his good work half-completed ; and telling his companion to bring the light, he took the child in his arms, carried her to his room, and placed her in his own bed : and ringing for a female servant who had lived with him for many years, he left her to her care, first directing her to prepare a nutritious beverage

which the Doctor had prescribed ; wisely judging that rest and food were what she most required.

‘Frank,’ said Harson, as he once more seated himself in his arm-chair, and applied his mug to his lips ; ‘that child as had hard usage.’

‘*That* she has,’ replied the other.

‘There are great brutes in this world, Frank.’

‘D —— d ones!’ answered the Doctor.

There was a pause, during which Harson looked in the fire, at the clock, and on the floor. At last, his eyes rested on the face of his companion. ‘I hope she won’t be sick ; but you ’ll see to her to-morrow, will you, Frank?’

The Doctor nodded ; and again Harson paused and seemed embarrassed. At last he said : ‘You know, Frank, that I am well-to-do in the world ; and that any expense——’

He paused abruptly ; for the Doctor, who was in the act of raising his mug to his lips, suddenly put it down, without tasting its contents, and laying his pipe beside it, looked him full in the face. ‘Well——?’

There was something in that single monosyllable so strongly indicative of hostility, that Harson waited until the Doctor repeated it. ‘Well? You said you were well-to-do in this world. What then?’

‘Come, come, Frank, keep your temper!’ said Harson, mildly. ‘You know very well what I was going to say ; and you must not get vexed at it.’

‘Yes, I *do* know what you were going to say. You wanted to tell me that I had no right to help that child without your paying for it. I’m not vexed, Harry, not in the least : but that’s all cursed nonsense. She’s my patient.’

‘But she’s in my house.’

‘I do n’t care if she is,’ replied the Doctor, rapidly in-

creasing in warmth. 'I do n't care whose house she's in. Come here I *will*. Attend her I *will*, at all times, morning, noon, and night, at all hours : and I'll blister, purge, leech, bleed, cup, vomit — ay, and I'll do a hundred other things, if it's necessary. Let me tell you *that* ; yes, and without a single cent, whether you like it or not. I'd like to see you prevent it ! I'll come to-morrow, at day-light, Sir ; and if you do n't open the door, I'll break it down. *See if I do n't !*'

As he concluded this speech, he rose from his chair, and clapping his hat on his head, left the house. Harson followed him out, and called after him, but he made no reply ; and the old man returned to the room, and stood in front of the fire, sad at heart that any word of his, however kindly meant, should have sent an old friend from his roof with an unkind feeling. While he was standing there, the door was opened ajar, and the head of the Doctor was thrust in.

'Harry, my old fellow,' he said, in very different tones from those which Harson had last heard, 'are you angry with me ?'

'No, Frank, no.'

'Nor am I with you. God bless you, Harry. Good-night !'

The door was shut with a slam ; and the next moment, the sound of the gate swinging against the gate-post, showed that the Doctor was in the street.

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. CHOWLES was the name of an elderly lady who was the confidential adviser of Harry Harrison in all cases of emergency; and as he regarded the unexpected addition of the child to his family in that light, he determined to speak with her on the subject without loss of time; and towards her dwelling he accordingly directed his steps.

It was in a dim, unfrequented part of the city; one of those out-of-the-way, shut-up streets, which are found in the heart even of this great, ever-changing metropolis, where the casual tread of a passer-by awakens echoes which startle the quiet tenants of the neighborhood, and draw to the windows heads and faces, and caps and head-gear, that might have belonged to the last century. Grass grows in the crevices of the stones in the summer season; and tall weeds, taking root in the gutters and on the eaves of the houses, nod sociably to plants of the same vagabond family, who, more aspiring than themselves, have gained a foothold in the moss which clings to the roofs. Time had played queer antics in other parts of the city, and made a fearful pulling down, remodelling, building up, laying out of streets; shutting up gardens, extinguishing blinking old windows, altering gray, antiquated houses into prim, fashionable new ones; and throwing such an air of dashing juvenility about their crumbling frames, that those who had grown old in their precincts became sad to see the change. These, and many things of a like nature, had been going on in other parts of the town; but this little spot had dodged the general

improvement, and now had a frightened, wary expression, and seemed to eye with suspicion every one who broke in upon its solitude.

It was in this quiet nook, and in a sleepy old house, with wooden shutters and a great semicircular cut in each of them, like a half-closed eye, that the lady lived. She was a widow ; and many years since had deposited a cross-grained husband under the ground, much to the satisfaction of her friends, but to her own great grief ; for she was a warm-hearted, high-tempered woman, and, in spite of his foibles, had clung to the gnarled old trunk, around which her affections had twined themselves in youth, with a devotion unaccountable to all. Harry Harson had been the friend of her husband, and at his death he became hers. Year in and year out, he had gone to and from that house, as unceremoniously as if it had been his own ; and always found a hand to welcome him, and a ready smile to greet him and his dog ; not but that he and the lady had their hours of storm as well as sunshine ; for, to tell the truth, high words often passed between them ; but even though they might occasionally part in dudgeon, it was forgotten by both, and the next evening for Harry's visit saw him there, the same as ever ; and he always found the great oaken arm-chair drawn out, his pipe filled, and a mug of hot toddy, mixed by the widow's own hand, waiting his arrival ; just as if his arrival were a matter of course.

It was a Christmas day, or rather the day was fast fading into twilight, as Harry turned the corner of the street in which Mrs. Chowles lived. He was in a gay mood that evening. His step was light and buoyant, and he hummed a merry old Christmas song as he went. Occasionally he interrupted it to bestow a friendly word upon Spite, who, close at his heels and as gay as his master, ambled along on three

legs; the fourth, after an affectation common to small dogs, being kept as a *corps de reserve*, and only used to aid him in skipping over a gutter, or a puddle of unusual magnitude.

Harry Harson had passed his Christmas evenings with the widow as long as he could remember. It was a pleasant thing to see how familiarly he raised the latch and with what confidence he walked in, like one sure of a welcome. As one of the neighbors sagaciously observed, 'it was a sight to see him.'

He stepped briskly across the cleanly-swept room, into which the street-door opened, and with a free-and-easy air knocked at the door of an inner room, into which none but Mrs. Chowles and a few of her special cronies were admitted.

'Who 's there?' demanded a shrill voice.

Her visitor did not answer, but repeated his knock, and stood with his full face beaming with fun, ready to enjoy her surprise, when she should open the door and discover who was there. But it did not open as soon as he expected, and the same voice exclaimed, 'Get you gone. I want none of your company. No one shall come in at this hour, not even if it were honest old Harry Harson himself.'

'I have something of importance to tell you, and I came early,' said Harry, not a little humbled; which same humility deprived his voice of so much of its usual hearty tone that the woman did not recognize it.

'Away with you!' she repeated, in the same exalted key. 'You may knock till doom's day; but come in you *shan't*!'

Harry's heart was full. Man and boy, for thirty years, he had spent his Christmas evenings in that little back-room. He had occupied the same corner, the same chair, and the same little tripod-stand on which to place his toddy, and rest the end of his long pipe, as he smoked; and now he was turned away like a dog! He thumped the end of his stick on

the floor, as much as to say that he hoped the devil might catch him if ever he crossed that threshold again. He cast a glance at Spite, who had turned short upon his auxiliary leg, and was looking at him with an eye whose expression indicated that if his master stomached *that*, he was not the man he took him to be, and turned to go.

There was something peculiar in that thump of the cudgel, and in the step of the man, which caught the ear of the lady, who was listening at the key-hole for the purpose of being ready with a retort to any reply with which the intruder might feel disposed to favor her; and she opened the door only in time to catch a glimpse of the broad-skirted coat of a man, and the tightly-curved tail of a dog, as they passed out.

‘Harry Harson! Harry Harson! I say,’ exclaimed she, in turn almost melted into tears, as she saw her warm-hearted crony leaving her house fairly provoked. ‘Come back, Harry! Where are you going?’

Harry heard her well enough, but he would not give in at once, and went stoutly out into the street; for he well knew that there was another entrance to the house, which the widow could reach from within much sooner than he could from without; and he walked slowly to give her time. True to his expectation, the widow was there, and as he was passing, without saying a word, she seized him by the arm and dragged him through a dark alley, and across divers passages, cluttered up with pails, pots, pans, and other mysterious utensils for family purposes; nor did she release her grasp until she had fairly seated him in his usual corner. Having him safely caged, she felt that she might with propriety indulge a slight outbreak of anger, and, turning sharply upon him, she asked:

‘What’s the meaning of this, Harry? What has put it

into your head to treat an old friend after this fashion? I'm ashamed of you!

'You would not let me in,' said Harson, gravely.

'Who knew it was you?' rejoined the widow.

'You said, even if it *were* me, that I should n't come in,' replied Harson.

'Yes, but I did n't know that your two ears were within hearing. I wanted to make what I said impressive. But come; have done with this; I'll have no squabbling on Christmas day.'

'Ah! Spite, poor Spite! Spite! Spite! Spite!' said she, turning to the dog, and snapping her fingers in the most insinuating manner; but Spite, pup and dog, had been there as punctually and nearly as long as his master; and although a small dog, he was a high-stomached one. He felt that he had been turned off, too; and was not to be brought round at the first word; so, after looking coldly at her, he turned stiffly away, and walked with a tight tail to a corner, like a dog resolved not to be taken in by specious professions. But the widow knew the soft spot in the dog's heart as well as in his master's. So she got up, took from a shelf in the kitchen a small woollen mat, and placing it directly in front of the fire, again made friendly overtures. Spite, by this time, had discovered that the corner which he had selected for his retreat was too much ventilated by a large rat-hole in its immediate vicinity, and being an invalid, and subject to attacks of rheumatism, in the lower joint of his right hind-leg, suffered himself to be mollified, and was finally induced, as an act of great condescension, to repose upon the mat aforesaid, where he dozed and snored for the rest of the evening, occasionally enlivening the conversation by a sudden sharp yelp, as, awakened by the heat, he testily shifted his position, and turned his cold side to the fire.

It was a snug, warm little room in which they were, serving partly as a kitchen and partly as a gossiping-room for the widow and her cronies. A high dresser, with plates, pans, kettles, and snow-white crockery glittering in the light of the fire, and reflecting fifty little fires on their surfaces, stood in one corner. In another, was a wide antiquated mahogany table, as black as jet, and shining so that one might see his face in it; and standing cheek by jowl with it was a huge mahogany bureau, with two brass handles hanging like door-knockers to each drawer. Then there were wide-seated chairs with great crooked legs, and leathern bottoms, and prim little wooden ones with straight legs and uncomfortable backs, and low wooden stools for the feet, and a queer, oddly-shaped, diminutive arm-chair with a mended leg, probably intended for the use of some old-fashioned child. On the floor was a thick, soft rag-carpet, covering the whole of it, excepting the great stone hearth which extended at least five feet into the room; and lastly, on the edge of this same hearth, was a small mahogany stand with three legs, on which stood Harry Harson's mug of hot toddy; and on which rested Harry Harson's elbow, and the end of his long pipe; and beside which was a capacious arm-chair, with a high back and huge carved arms, and a pair of bandy legs, in which was seated the burly figure of Harson himself.

The widow drew a chair to the small stand, and taking up her work, seated herself near the light and commenced sewing. Her companion lighted his pipe, and permitting it to rest idly on the table, looked around the room.

'You are very snug here, Mrs. Chowles,' said he, after he had finished his survey. 'Very snug; you must be very happy here.'

The widow glanced hastily at him, and replied: 'Yes, yes,

Harry, I am quite contented — at least I hope I am ; but I've been happier here ; and one can't always forget. But all is very comfortable about me : and I've much to be thankful for. I know it, Harry ; and I endeavor always to keep it in my mind.'

Harson for some moments did not interrupt the pause, which succeeded the reply of the woman ; and when he did, his words caused Mrs. Chowles to look at him with some surprise ; for he murmured, as if speaking to himself : ' Poor child ! so young, and to have seen so much suffering ! '

Apparently unconscious that he had spoken, Harson resumed his pipe, and surrounded himself with a thick halo of smoke, without saying another word. Mrs. Chowles, however, broke in upon his reverie by inquiring where his wits were ; a question which caused the old man to look up more bewildered than ever, for at that moment the objects of her inquiry were very busily engaged with the child whom he had left under his own roof. Drawing his chair closer to the chimney-place, stretching his feet to the fire, and having excited the curiosity of the widow to agony-pitch by telling her that he had something of importance to communicate, and by delaying this communication until he had looked at his dog to see that he was comfortable ; and by clearing his throat and sipping his toddy, and by puffing deliberately at his pipe to clear his ideas, and by getting up to shake the cushion of his chair, and by sundry other small performances, usually preparatory to confidential communications, which nearly bring about the death of the expectant listener, if such listener be of a fidgetty temperament, Harson began his story, and recounted such meagre particulars respecting the child as he had been able to glean in the course of the day.

And few enough they were ; a detail of want, sickness

and suffering ; yet, mingled with them all, was a vague recollection of better days, of times and places, and even of persons, which started up in her memory in fitful flashes like familiar things, and then faded away until she thought that she must have seen them only in dreams, and that wretchedness was the only reality she had ever known. She had a dim fancy, too, of a kind face, which long since had looked upon her often and often, and had smiled upon her, and pressed its shadowy lips to her cheek. It seemed like that of an old friend ; and even long after other things had grown less vivid in her memory, that face lingered ; but it was growing more and more dim, and it sometimes made her sad to think so ; for she felt as if an old friend were leaving her forever. Child as she was, she had thought much of it, and wondered why that same face should appear so often, and why she should love it above all others, and whether she had ever seen it elsewhere. She supposed she had not ; for, except in these occasional and twilight fancies, she had no recollection of having been otherwise than she now was. These, and many other glimmerings of memory, mingled with such sad realities of her history as made his heart ache, Harson had gathered from the child, as she sat that morning on a small bench at his feet, with her head leaning against his knee.

Mrs. Chowles laid down her work as he went on ; and drawing still closer to him, and leaning her cheek on her hand, and fixing her eyes on his, listened with deep interest and without interrupting him. She was a warm-hearted woman, and long before the story was concluded she had formed a plan for the child. She thought how snugly she could put up a little bed in that room for her, and how cheerful she would make the house ; for the old woman was sociably inclined ; and although she was not at all at a loss

for cronies, among the stiff-capped dames of her neighborhood, still she longed for the merry tone of a child's voice. How cheerful and young she felt as she thought of it! How bright and youthful her withered cheek became, and how her dark eyes lighted up to the old lustre, which had made them not to be gazed on with impunity in days gone by! Every thing was settled in her mind. The child was to come to her house, live with her, and sleep in that very room. She would be a pleasant companion on the long evenings, and would make her fire-side quite gay when Harry should come to visit them. But Harson's final words put an end to her plans.

'Well, Mrs. Chowles,' said he, 'she's under my roof, and so help me Heaven! *there* she shall stay until I can better her situation. She has left a brother in the place she came from; but she knows nothing of the city, and can't even tell the name of the street where it was, although she would know the spot if she saw it. To-morrow I shall apply at the police for a warrant against the woman. The child says her name is Blossom; and perhaps the knowledge of that, may put the officers on the right track to find her house. We must get the boy out of her hands, or this child will never be herself.'

The widow looked long and wistfully at the old man, as if desirous of saying something. At last she inquired:

'Wo'n't she trouble you, Harry? Wo'n't she be in the way in your house?'

'Not a whit!' replied Harson. 'Beside, widow,' said he, assuming more than his usual earnestness, 'suppose she were? what then? Should I fling her back to those from whom she came, and leave her, pure and spotless as she now is, in the power of those who would make her what I blush

to name? Surely not, surely not! Mrs. Chowles, can *you* advise such a course?’

As he spoke, Harson rested his pipe on the table and looked in the face of his friend with a grave seriousness which showed that he was not a little troubled at such a suggestion from such a quarter.

‘I did not mean that,’ said Mrs. Chowles, not a little confused at the misinterpretation of her meaning. ‘I thought that if she were in your way, and you have always been a single man, and unused to the ways of children, might have found her a burden, that, as I was here, and alone, perhaps you might spare her to me, I would take charge of her until we could learn something more about her.’

The ice fairly broken, the widow became quite urgent in her request; demonstrating to her own satisfaction that she liked children above all things, and more particularly a child exactly like this one; and how pleasant it would be for her to have her in the house, and how anxious she always had been to have some one about her, besides the deaf woman-servant who served as cook, waiter, and chambermaid; and how comfortable, and snug, and merry they would be, and how much better it would be for the child to be with her than with Harry, or in fact with any other person in the world. Having consumed her breath and rhetoric at the same time, she paused for a reply.

Harson, when she began to answer, had listened with some anxiety; but as she went on, his expression became more complacent, and he raised his pipe to his mouth and smoked in silence, with his eyes intently fixed on her face until she paused.

‘Is this Lorillard’s best?’ inquired he, after a long and thoughtful interval had elapsed.

‘Phsaw!’ interrupted the widow, ‘you’re thinking of the tobacco, when I’m speaking of the child. What do you say to my proposition?’

‘I’ll think of it,’ replied Harson. ‘At present I say nothing, one way or the other.’

While the widow was yet urging her point, the door had been pushed gently open, and a girl of about seventeen years of age had entered the room, and seated herself without being observed by either. She waited until there was a pause in the conversation, and then stepped to the table and took off her bonnet, putting back a mass of bright curls that fell across her eyes, and revealing a face which might have made many a young heart ache. Still she was not observed until she laid her hand on Harson’s arm, and, in a low voice, uttered his name. The old man turned, looked up, and started to his feet, caught both her hands in his.

‘Kate! my own dear, darling, little Kate!’ said he, shaking her hands, and looking in her face, while every feature in his own beamed with heartfelt pleasure. ‘My own little friend, how is it with you? All well? I see it in that merry eye! Well, I’m glad of it, Kate. God bless you! May it always be so. How is the old man? But did you come here alone?’

The girl hesitated slightly, and then said: ‘No; some one came with me and left me at the door.’

‘I thought so,’ said the old man, laughing; ‘and I’ll wager my mug of toddy against the head of a pin, that I can tell who that ‘some one’ is. Never mind, Kate; you need n’t blush. He’s a fine fellow; and had I a daughter, I could n’t wish her better luck than to get such a husband as Ned Somers. He’s poor, it’s true, but never fear; he’ll push his way in the world. It’s in him; and the day will come when he’ll hold his head with the best of them. Come, sit down; here’s a chair.’

Although the girl laughed, her manner showed that she was ill at ease; and, light-hearted as she seemed, Harry Harson soon observed that there was something in her mind which troubled her. Supposing that she had called for the purpose of speaking with Mrs. Chowles alone, he got up, and taking his hat and cane, said that he must go.

‘I left the child far from well,’ said he, ‘and I shall feel anxious till I know how she is. Good night. Come, Spite.’

Spite turned testily on his mat, gaped until his jaws seemed on the eve of cracking, and then leisurely got up. No sooner, however, did Harson prepare to go, than the girl rose, and putting on her bonnet, said she would accompany him, as she had something to communicate to him; and that he could leave her at her father’s house, which they would pass on his way home. ‘If Ned comes,’ said she to the widow, ‘tell him I’m gone, and with whom. Good night.’

To say that the widow had no curiosity to know what this communication might be, would be stating what was not the fact; for although she dropped nothing to lead to a surmise that such was the case, yet she followed them to the door in the hope that something might leak out to furnish a clue to this mysterious interview; and for some time after they were gone, and their forms hid by a turn in the street, she stood at the door looking in the direction which they had taken. Deriving no peculiar information from this species of airing, she retired to her room, where she again wondered and pondered until she was aroused by a knock at the door, and the entrance of a young man, in obedience to a command from her to that effect, which followed the knock.

‘Good evening, Mrs. Chowles,’ said he, looking around him; ‘but where’s Kate?’

‘Gone home,’ replied the widow, ‘Harry Harson went with her. She wanted to speak with him. Wo’n’t you come in, Mr. Somers?’

‘No, thank you,’ replied the young man. ‘I’m glad she has seen him. If any one has influence to help her, *he* can. But I must be off. Good night.’ And, without stopping to explain the mystery, he too went off, leaving Mrs. Chowles as much in the dark as ever.

CHAPTER IV.

A GLORIOUS night it was; and the moon shone down upon the tall houses, lighting up the seams which time had scored in their old faces; giving them a cold, gray, corpse-like look, and shining upon the quaint old chimneys which stood high on the house-tops, stark and stiff, like frozen statues, and sparkling, and glittering, and twinkling on the cold window-panes, as if in rivalry of the fire-lights which gleamed from the black shadows thrown by the opposite buildings, like the glowing eyes of some great monster, keeping an unwinking watch on passers-by. How still and quiet it was! Even the light foot-fall of the girl awoke an echo; yet it was not a dead hush; for far off, like the hum of a distant hive, was heard the throbbing of the great city. With the girl hanging on his arm, Harson took his way through the street, walking stoutly along, and thumping his cane down, and stepping somewhat proudly, and even more vigorously than he was wont to do; for some how or other, old as he was, and he made no secret of his years, there was an indefinable feeling, that could scarcely be called vanity, which made him desirous of appearing in the eyes of the young girl who tripped at his side to be, not absolutely a young fellow, for that he did not pretend to be, but a hale, hearty old one; and that he really was, and a sturdy one too, who had an arm to defend her, ay, and a fist that might have proved an unpleasant deposit on a gentleman's nose, or even in one of his eyes. The old man was proud of his charge; and well he might be; for as he walked along and looked down in her glad face, as the full moon shone upon it and lighted up her deep blue eyes, bright and flashing

with youth, and the hopes of a young heart, he could not help thinking that she was very beautiful; and that if he had married many years ago, instead of being the stubborn, crusty, obstinate old bachelor that he was, he might have had a daughter like her, leaning on his arm and looking to him for counsel and love. Then across his mind floated the memory of one long since gone; one whom he had loved when he was a mere boy, and with whom he had strolled on many a bright night like this, and in whose face he had looked, as he now did in that of the girl at his side; and whose eyes had rested on his, and in whose ears he had whispered many a promise and many a hope; and who had entered into all his plans, and listened to them without wearying; for she, poor girl! had loved him well. The flowers of many a year had bloomed and faded over her grave since then, but *he* could not forget her.

‘She was like you, Kate, very like you; indeed she was, Kate,’ muttered he, choking down a feeling which even then rose in his throat, and making an abortive attempt at whistling.

The girl looked up, as if expecting him to say something more, and then simply asked, ‘Who, Harry?’

The old man started as if the sound of another’s voice had awakened him from a dream. ‘Did you speak, Kate? Oh! ay, I remember; I was dreaming, I was dreaming; sad dreams, sad dreams! Never mind, Kate, never mind. But Kate,’ said he, suddenly stopping short in his walk and facing his companion, ‘you had something to tell me; and here we are at your own home, and I have been talking of other things, without giving you a chance to utter a word. It’s a bright night; we’ll walk up and down here, and you can tell me what you have to say. Come, Kate.’

Although the girl had sought the interview, and had come

out for the express purpose of communicating something to him, yet now she seemed to find it far from easy to commence.

‘Is it about the old man?’ asked Harrison, after nearly a minute had elapsed without her having uttered a word; ‘Is he ill? or in trouble?’

‘No, no, he’s well;’ replied the girl, hastily; ‘but — he’s sadly altered in manner.’

‘He’s old, Kate, very old; and you must bear with him;’ replied Harrison.

‘Bear with him, Harry!’ repeated she, earnestly; ‘is there any thing that I would not do for him? Oh! no, no! It is not for myself that I speak. But he has strangely altered, indeed; and I fear, Harry, that all is not as it should be. He sits much by himself, goes out much, and at strange hours for one like him. He starts at every noise, and now in his old age, when his mind should be at peace, it seems filled with fear. Persons come to see him who never used to visit him. Heaven grant that I do not slander them; but there are some among them whose faces seem blighted and seared by God’s curse. I’m afraid, Harry,’ said she, sinking her voice, ‘that they are hatching some plot to lead him to his ruin. He’s known to have money, and what is there that some would not do to obtain that? A man’s gold has often put him in his coffin.’

Harrison walked on in silence. There was something in the impressive, earnest manner of the girl, that startled him, and as it were forced the very truth of her suspicion on him; but still he did not show it; and after a moment’s silence he said: ‘I’ve no fear for his life, Kate; as for the rest, it may be all fancy. His going out at unusual hours may have excited your suspicions; and these, once on the alert, would lead you to observe many peculiarities of manner which had hitherto escaped your notice. No, no, Kate;

depend on it, Jacob Rhoneland has not lived till eighty to become a dupe or a victim in his old age.'

The girl shook her head : 'I wish it were so, indeed I do !' But she knew that it was otherwise, and so she told Harson. Until within a year he had been a blithe-hearted old man ; and although time was telling upon him, he bore sturdily up against it, and made his home a snug and happy one for his child. But about a year previous, a man had come there, a stranger, whom she had never seen before. He had entered the house without ceremony, and asked for Rhoneland. Her father had started as he saw the stranger, and taking him by the arm led him out of the room. From that time her father had become changed. He grew moody and irritable ; shunned her company, and spoke little to her. The stranger came often ; and not unfrequently contrived to drop in the room where she was, and endeavored to enter into conversation with her. But the old man watched him narrowly, and he seldom found a chance ; but although he thus balked the humor of his visitor, it was evident that he did it with fear. But now and then there were transient gleams of his former kindness of disposition, when his heart seemed to struggle against its bonds, and a gush of his old affection welled up and showed itself. And at times like these when she threw her arms around his neck, and begged him to confide in her ; to turn his back upon those who were breaking him down, and to love her as he once had done ; he would put her aside kindly, and tell her that she was a child, that she did not know what she said, but that she meant well, and that he was not angry with her ; and then, patting her on the head, would send her away. At other times he was fierce and irritable ; and then she dared not speak to him, or to let him see that she observed his mood, for it made him worse. And these turns generally came on

after a visit from the stranger. Such was the substance of the girl's story.

'He's out to-night,' said she, 'and I was afraid to stay alone in the house; so I went to Mrs. Chowles'. Hist! there he comes, now! Don't look at him; pretend not to see him!'

As she spoke, she pointed to a person who was approaching. He was a large man, apparently very old, but still a giant in frame. He passed them with his long white hair hanging on his shoulders, his hands clasped behind his back, muttering to himself, but looking neither to the right nor left.

'He's on his way home,' said the girl, in a whisper; 'he's been with him to-night.'

'Him? who?' inquired Harson.

'The strange man. 'Michael Rust,' he calls himself.

They both stopped and watched the old man until he entered his house; and then Harson walked slowly on, with the hand of the arm which supported the girl's thrust in the breast of his coat, his head bent forward, and his eyes fixed on the ground. At last he looked in her face, and observing something in its expression which induced him to believe that she had something farther to say, he asked:

'Is that all, Kate?'

The girl hesitated; at last she said: 'There is something else; about myself.'

Whatever it was it seemed very difficult to communicate; for she paused again, until Harson said: 'Well, Kate; don't be afraid to tell me; look upon me as a brother; an old brother—quite an old one. There, go on now.'

'I am sure,' said she, speaking hurriedly, and in a low voice, and leaning her face so as almost to touch that of the old man, 'that this man, this Rust, has spoken to father

about me — me and Ned. He do n't like Ned ; he has met him twice at the house, and Ned would n't give up to him ; and once or twice he put him down. He has hated Ned ever since ; and I am sure has tried to get father to forbid him the house. Ned thinks so too, and was for quarrelling with him at once ; but I advised him to keep quiet, and told him that I would speak to you about it. I hope you 'll advise us what to do, Harry.'

The girl's voice became thick and husky as she spoke ; and as Harson looked at her, he saw that she was very pale.

'What does your father say ?' inquired he.

'He likes Ned, and would n't listen to it, at first ; and I thought was glad to see Rust cowed before him. But he begins to speak differently now ; although he does not say much. His manner toward Ned is changed, and Ned feels it.'

Again Harson walked on in silence ; at last, stopping in front of the house where she lived, he said : 'This is all very strange, Kate ; but depend on me — I'll fathom it yet. Let me take my own way about it, and we'll see what's to be done ; but I must not act hastily. I'm glad you spoke to me. Here's your home ; good night. Keep your own counsel, Kate. God bless you !'

Kate paused upon the threshold, watching his retiring figure until he crossed the street, and was hid by the black shadow of the opposite buildings.

As he disappeared, Kate's eyes filled with tears. 'There he goes, my best, my only friend ! If he fail, God help me !' said she, clasping her hands, and pressing them convulsively to her bosom. 'Good, kind, warm-hearted old Harry Harson ! God bless you, indeed !'

‘Have n’t you a kind word for me, too, Kate?’ said a person who had come up, while she was gazing in the opposite direction. ‘I’ve been waiting this half hour for you and Harson to get through your conversation. Have n’t you a ‘Good night, Ned,’ for me? Come Kate,’ said he, taking her hand, and pressing it kindly, ‘say, ‘Good night, Ned!’’

‘Good night, Ned,’ said she, repeating the words, with a faint smile.

‘Can you tell me nothing more, Kate?’ said he, still lingering, and holding her hand.

The girl shook her head, for her heart was too full to speak.

‘Well, Kate, I’ll not keep you in the cold; good night! God bless you! Brighter days will come yet, never fear.’ He shook her hand again, and went off, not however without looking back, and waving his hand several times, before he was out of sight.

Kate stood there long after he was gone; and then, turning slowly, went into the house. She paused at the door of an inner room, which was partly open, and looked in, without entering. It was a small, confined room; lighted only by a single candle, which flared wildly in the wind, caused by the open door; shedding an unsteady, flickering light. Mean, in every respect, the room was; without carpet, with a wooden table, a large wooden chest, plentifully studded with brass nails, and secured by a padlock, large enough for a custom-house store, and a few wooden chairs. In one of these sat Jacob Rhoneland. He had a noble head; with white, silvery locks, and a broad, high forehead; ruddy cheeks, and eyes that flashed and sparkled, in defiance of age. A coat of rusty brown, much too large for his person, faded, darned, and patched, with huge pockets, hanging open and reaching

to his heels; pantaloons of the same material, and heavy shoes, completed his attire. He was sitting in front of the fire, his knees crossed, and his arms around them, rocking to and fro, and talking to himself:

‘Does old age bring fancies with it such as these?’ muttered he. ‘Does the grave fling its shadows into the land of life? Is there any thing here, *here*,’ said he, pressing his hand against his breast, ‘that gold wo’n’t quiet? Ha! ha! look at that smoke as it dances up the chimney! It’s but air, and yet I saw faces in it. How they leered at me, and grinned! What eyes they had! Michael Rust’s eyes! How they whispered, and giggled, as they whirled up the chimney? Who’s there?’ exclaimed he, starting to his feet, as the door creaked at the touch of the girl, who was entering. ‘What, Kate! eaves-dropping? Did you hope to overhear much? Did you hope to find the road to happiness by playing spy on an old man! Did you want to learn the secrets of your father, to hold them like a lash over his head? I say, Kate, have you been listening?’

‘I have, father,’ replied the girl, laying her hand upon his arm. ‘I have been listening; and I have heard enough to let me know that you are far from happy. Oh, father! why will you not cast from you those dark thoughts and dreams, and, above all, avoid those who bring them?’

The old man looked anxiously in her face, and moved restlessly; but he did not turn from her.

‘I speak of that man who has been here so often of late;’ continued she, ‘he with the dark hair, and an eye that never meets yours.’

‘You mean Rust, Michael Rust; don’t offend him, Kate!’ said the old man, earnestly, and speaking fast. ‘I tell you, Kate, that man, miserable as he seems, has me in his power. Do you hear that, girl? and can, if he will, crush me body and soul; but trust me, my own dear child,

when I tell you, that although I cannot control the power he has over me, and although he can make these old cheeks tingle, yet Jacob Rhoneland, were the truth known, could look his fellow-man in the face without fear.'

'I believe it, father, I know it ;' exclaimed the girl earnestly. 'But,' asked she, 'why does he come here so often? he does not seem to have any object.'

The old man drew her to him and looked into her eyes; but he saw nothing but an expression of undisguised anxiety on his own account. At last he said :

'You're a mere child in the ways of the world, my poor little Kate; I cannot tell you more now. Why should I lay a heavy load upon your young heart?'

'Oh, father,' exclaimed the girl, 'if you did but know how willingly I would bear it, you would not hesitate. I am a poor, feeble-minded girl, not fit to advise or counsel you; but listen to me, dear father — will you?'

'Yes, Kate, yes,' said the old man, taking her hand. 'I'll always listen to you, for you always mean well; I know that, and I like to hear the sound of your voice. I've heard it so long, Kate, that I should feel sad to lose it now — very sad, Kate.'

'God grant that you never may!' said the girl. 'God grant that I may not die and leave you here with none to care for you.'

'Die, Kate, die!' exclaimed Rhoneland, starting back and running his eye over her form, as if in search of some latent symptom of disease; 'Oh! no, no! do n't talk of that — do n't talk of that. That would be sad, indeed; but that's folly, mere folly. What were you going to say?'

'I wanted to ask,' said she, in a hesitating voice, 'if there be no way of breaking off our intercourse with that man Rust. Father, you are never well after he is gone. Sometimes for

days afterward you are not yourself. There's something in your connection with him that is tugging away at your heart. I know there is. Break with him at once! Do, *do* for my sake!

The old man grasped her hands in his, which shook violently; while his eyes glanced round the room, with a startled, suspicious look. 'Hush! Kate,' said he, in a whisper, 'do n't speak of that; do n't speak of it, or even think of it. Be civil to him, Kate. Come what may, Kate, do n't be rude; you must not; and I —— Never mind; there, Kate, go, go; not a word more.'

As he spoke, he gently pushed her from him; and once more turning to the fire, took his seat, and watched the smoke as it eddied up the gaping chimney, occasionally casting a glance at his daughter, to see that she was not studying his features. And thus they sat, until a neighboring clock tolled the hour of midnight; when the old man started up and said:

'Kate, you're growing pale. Go to bed, my child; go to bed. It will never do for your cheeks to grow thin and white.'

The girl rose; and the old man kissing her cheek, bade her good-night, and also retired to his own room.

CHAPTER V.

IN the neighborhood of Wall-street, in that part of the city where the hum of the moving crowd is greatest, and the tramp of hurrying feet is unbroken, stood a high, narrow house, between two others, as tall and narrow as itself, with windows crowded into every part of it, for the purpose of admitting light into numberless small rooms, which filled its interior. The color of this house had once been bright red; but the dust had settled in its gutters, through which, they being leaky and out of repair, the rain had trickled in tears of mud down its ruddy front; so that, although the house was yet in its teens, it had the dusty look of ripe age. From top to bottom, it was occupied. Its vaults were filled with condiments of various kinds, belonging to the keeper of a refectory, who tenanted its basement; on the first floor a tailor flaunted his sign-board; and thence heavenward, cramped, dusty rooms, begrimed with dirt and cobwebs, and otherwise dark and dingy, with dim entries, and steep staircases, and doors with tin signs nailed on them, indicated that lawyers made it their haunt. By lawyers of every class was it tenanted; by veterans, run down by clients: by those newly launched, as yet run down only by tailors and other duns, and whose offices were usually locked, with a notice on the door, reading thus: 'Gone to the Hall,' or, 'Gone to Court;' being professional terms, used by neophytes of the bar, when going, for an indefinite period, to some equally indefinite place. In the upper rooms, the desperadoes of the profession made their roost; men who locked their

doors against all clients ; smoked incessantly ; talked loudly ; fought, quarrelled, played cards, and offered to bet dollars by never less than the thousand, thereby showing that they were rich ; sung boisterous songs, and danced hornpipes and other fanciful performances over the heads of 'the lower floors ;' whose offices were redolent with tobacco and brandy, and had an atmosphere resembling a bottled fog ; who went in and out in squads, taking the key in their pockets, and affixing notices for nobody ; passing through the entry like a drove of horses, and leaving the world at large in profound ignorance as to their whereabouts and occupation.

Such were the tenants of this building ; but amid them was a single office on the second floor, whose inhabitant differed from all the rest. On the door was the simple name, MICHAEL RUST ; no intimation of his profession. None knew him, nor what he did, nor who he was, nor where he went, nor whence he came. Sometimes for weeks the office door was locked, and none entered it. Then a single man came, unlocked the door, took out the key, and locking it on the inside, shut himself in ; remained there sometimes ten or twelve hours, and then went out, locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and was absent again, sometimes for a day, or a week, or a month ; even John Smith, the black man in the garret, who kindled the fires, and with a broom smeared the dust over the carpets of the rooms, and called it sweeping, whereby he gained a dollar a month, even he got nothing at his hands. His room was usually locked ; and when John once accidentally got in and found the owner there, he was invited to retire, and not call again. The very mystery of the man created quite an excitement among the 'desperadoes,' one of whom, happening to meet him on the stairs, determined to worm his way into his acquaintance,

and, by way of breaking the ice, remarked to him 'that it was a very fine day.'

'Who said it was n't? I'm sure *I* did n't, did I?' demanded Michael Rust, stopping short, and fixing his coal-black eye on the face of the startled speaker, who, not a little abashed, replied: 'Oh, no! certainly not.'

'Very well,' said the other; 'then go to those who deny it, and tell it to *them*.'

Saying which, he turned on his heel, and deliberately descended the stairs. This brief dialogue got noised about, until it reached the ears of others of the 'desperadoes,' who, incensed that any man should presume to keep his own concerns to himself, forthwith beset him in his office. But he was imperturbable. They danced hornpipes at his door, in the most frantic manner; smoked there by the hour; howled, and yelped, and hooted, until the hall leading to that room was a perfect pandemonium, and several gray-headed lawyers in the neighboring rooms were nearly demented. One of them in particular, who at the time was drawing up a will for a blind man, became so much bewildered, that he inserted his own name instead of that of the residuary legatee mentioned by the testator, whereby he acquired a large property; never having detected his error until the death of the latter, when of course it was too late to remedy, and therefore useless to mention it. But Michael Rust took no notice of these annoyances. He seemed perfectly indifferent, or totally deaf. He made neither remonstrance nor complaint, but went in and came out the same as ever; remained there as long as before; and seemed to suffer no inconvenience, until, brazen-throated as they were, their voices grew husky, and they were compelled to raise the siege, and leave him unmolested in his mystery.

He had a single visitor, equally taciturn with himself, and

equally imperturbable, who came occasionally, gave a single knock at the door, muttered a few indistinct words in the key-hole, and was instantly admitted. He too, in his passages to and from the office, had been way-laid by the desperadoes, and perplexed by knotty and penetrating questions. For some time he met them with the same reserve which characterized Michael Rust; but having been one day closely beset and sorely annoyed by a solitary desperado whom he encountered on the stairs, and being a brawny, square-built fellow, he answered in so unexpected a manner, that his questioner, on recovering his composure, found himself on the bottom step of the stairs, somewhat bruised in person, and not a little disfigured in countenance. The precise nature of the reply never leaked out; but from that hour the stranger passed to and fro free of question.

On the evening of Christmas night, Michael Rust sat in his office, wrapped in a blue camblet cloak, a red silk handkerchief bound round his head, and an old hat on the top of that, pressed down so far, that his shaggy brows and twinkling black eyes could scarcely be seen beneath the level of its brim. He was not yet fifty, but his face was thin and wrinkled, his eye glowing, and his complexion sallow, though not sickly; and there was a dark, sinister look about him, not at all diminished by his shaggy, black brows, and the gipsy-like hair, which here and there stole from beneath his strange head-gear. In his office was a single table covered with green baize; an ink-stand, pen, and wafers, and two chairs. These constituted all its furniture; and on one of these chairs, and at this table, sat Michael Rust, engaged in writing. There was no fire in the grate; and as the dim light of the single candle flickered through the room, a more dismal place could scarcely have been found.

Scratch, scratch went Rust's pen, down one page and over

to the next, and down that. He was a slow, deliberate, untiring writer; and his pen was a stubborn, obstinate stump, which seemed to have an eternity of endurance about it. Occasionally he varied his occupation, by putting the stump in his mouth; drawing the candle close to him, and poring over the paper. Having at last concluded his writing, he folded it up, and placed it under the ink-stand, and muttering something to himself, leaned back in his chair. 'Hallo!' said he, in reply to a knock at the door, which brought the chair rapidly forward, and him to his feet; 'who 's there?'

'I am!' responded a gruff voice, from the outside; 'I and somebody else.'

'Oh! very well,' answered Mr. Rust, without moving 'you can come in; but 'somebody else' must go about his business. This is n't his office, and he's no acquaintance of mine.'

'But he *must* come in,' returned the voice from without.

'He *must*, must he?' replied Mr. Rust; 'well, *let* him;' and saying this, he seated himself, and drawing from a portfolio, which he took from a drawer in the table, a small slip of paper, renewed his writing, without paying the slightest regard to the person in the passage, whose knocking now became extremely violent. Rust however had received too much treatment of that kind at the hands of 'the desperadoes,' to be put down by what could emanate from a single individual; and with his mouth pursed up to a point, and his sharp black eyes intent on his paper, he wrote on, as unconcernedly as if there were no one within a mile. A foot was soon called to the assistance of the knuckles; and these being unsuccessful, the visitor demanded a parley:

'Can n't I exchange a word with you, Mr. Rust?' he asked, with more deference than he had hitherto used.

‘Of course you can,’ replied Rust, with great suavity, but without discontinuing his writing; ‘of course you can; always happy to exchange civilities with my friends. Go on.’

‘I can’t speak with a door between us,’ replied his visitor, angrily.

‘Bless my soul! can’t you?’ replied Rust. ‘Well, there’s the key-hole; speak through that; the slide’s down; but that does n’t matter: I’am very quick of hearing. Go on. I’m quite impatient.’

Here Mr. Rust chuckled to himself; and laying down his pen, rubbed his hands cheerfully together, after which he resumed writing. A muttered exclamation escaped the man on the outside; but apparently he saw no alternative save the dismissal of his companion; and perhaps he knew not a little of the uncompromising character of the man with whom he had to deal. So he yielded the point, and spoke in an under tone to the person with him, who slowly descended the stairs and went out of the building, shutting the door heavily after him.

When the noise caused by his departure had ceased to echo through the still house, Rust arose, and taking the light in his hand, opened the door, and looked down the passage, then drew the stranger in the room and turned the key.

‘What’s the meaning of this, blast ye!’ exclaimed he, every trace of merriment vanishing from his face; his black eye flashing, and his lips working with anger; ‘what’s the meaning of this, I say? Who was that? Why did you bring him? Answer me! Have I not forbidden the entrance of a soul? Have I not been beset, from the day that I first came to this house, by those wishing to penetrate my secrecy? Has not this room been made a very hell on earth by those who would force themselves into my acquaintance? Ha! ha! they would know Michael Rust! They would *know* him,

would they? Few care to do that, do they, good Enoch? None love him, but good Enoch Grosket; but he loves him, does n't he? He hates to see Michael alone, and solitary, and ne brings a friend to keep him company, and make him merry. Hark ye, sir!' exclaimed he, suddenly changing his tone; 'I know not why you brought that man here, whether as an eaves-dropper or as witness to conversations which it might suit you to have remembered and me to have forgotten, or merely as a casual friend; or because you thought that ne might suit my purpose; but *this* let me tell you, you'll be a bold man if you venture it again.'

It was not a pleasant thing to have two such eyes flashing in one's very face; and to have a voice, husky with passion, hissing in one's ear; but Mr. Grosket seemed scarcely to listen to him; for, without reply, he walked to the table, and throwing off the cloak which was wrapped about him, drew from his pocket a bundle of papers, and proceeded leisurely to untie them.

Rust stood in the middle of the room, watching him with a keen, anxious eye, for there was much in his face to perplex him. Its peculiar characteristics were sternness and resolution, not unmingled with honesty; perhaps a certain bluntness of manner might have added something to this last expression, for many who lack the former adopt the latter as a substitute; and although spurious, it is much more convenient, and passes nearly as current. At last Rust went to the table, and sat down opposite him, pulling his hat over his eyes; with his feet on the front round of the chair, and his hands folded and resting on the table before him; his thin lips working in and out, but without speaking. There was a strong contrast between the sharp, fierce face of Michael Rust; his thin frame and gaunt, wire-like figure, and that of the ponderous, brawny fellow

who sat opposite to him, coolly looking over his papers, so confident in his own muscular force and indomitable will, that notwithstanding the outburst of passion which had just escaped his associate, he did not deem it worth while to bestow even a look at his proceedings, or to guard against him.

‘Count that,’ said he, taking from his papers a roll of bank-notes, and placing it in front of Rust. ‘Count that; there should be five hundred, with interest for five years, which makes it six hundred and seventy-five.’

He threw himself back in his chair as he spoke, and folding his arms, looked steadily in the face of his companion. Michael did not move a finger towards the money, but said, in a quick, hurried manner: ‘How now, Enoch; what’s this?’

‘Count it first,’ replied the man, sternly; ‘then I’ll answer your questions. Not a word,’ said he, raising his finger, seeing that Rust was preparing to interrupt him; ‘don’t speak. I’ll not answer till you’ve counted that.’

Michael paused a moment, with his sharp black eyes twinkling and flashing, and then wetting the end of his fore finger, proceeded to count the bills.

‘Six hundred and seventy-five,’ said he, as he finished.

‘All right,’ said Grosket. ‘Now,’ added he, placing in front of him a paper, ‘sign that.’

Rust took the paper and read it from beginning to end: and then pushing the money back, said to Enoch: ‘This is a receipt for five hundred dollars, loaned to you to pay off a judgment against you, in favor of John Collins, with interest to date. Poh! Enoch; I don’t want the money, and you *do*. Return it some other time—some other time; a year hence, or two years—or at any time.’

‘I’ll pay it *now*,’ replied Grosket, coldly. ‘Sign that receipt, will you?’

‘Well, well, Enoch, if you insist on it, I will,’ said Rust, taking up his pen, and dipping it in the ink, and signing his name to the receipt. ‘There,’ said he, pushing the paper to him. ‘I’m glad you’re able to pay it; indeed I am, for your sake.’

A strange smile curled the lip of the other, as he folded up the paper and put it in his pocket. ‘Now, Michael Rust, said he, in a stern voice, ‘you and I separate. Five years ago, when I was in want, on the very verge of ruin; when there was nothing before me but starvation, to my wife and child; you stepped in between me and my creditors, loaned me this money, and kept them at bay until I could get along.’

‘Do n’t speak of that,’ said Rust; ‘forget it, Enoch; I had almost, I assure you. I ——’

‘Do n’t interrupt me,’ said Grosket, striking his fist on the table; ‘hear me out. At that time, I would have died for you. There was nothing that I would not have done for you.’

‘You were always grateful, Enoch — always. Well.’

‘Well,’ said the man, speaking slowly, and in a tone which, though low, was so distinct that even when it sank to a whisper, which it did at times, it was perfectly audible. ‘I *did* serve you. Deeds, which have caused my cheeks to tingle with shame, deeds which have made me loathe myself, and hate him who could take advantage of the best feelings of a grateful heart to prostitute them to his own evil purposes, have I done for you. I have followed you in a course of crime; never swerving, nor shrinking back. Whatever my heart might have felt, my actions never faltered. If at times a feeling of misgiving came over me, I thought of my wife and daughter, and of what they would have been but for you, and I went on.’

‘Well?’ said Rust, impatiently, ‘well?’

‘When I first met you,’ continued Grosket, ‘that daughter was a mere child, but in five years she became a woman; and with all a woman’s warm confidence of heart, those whom she loved she loved well.’

‘Well, and she married,’ interrupted Rust. ‘I know all that.’

‘Ay! she *did* marry!’ said Grosket, setting his teeth, and speaking in a low, fierce tone; ‘she *did* marry, but *not* the man she loved. *You*, for your own evil purposes, and with a falseness which I have since detected, blackened his character; persuaded me, your blind tool, into the belief that he was a scoundrel. I forbade him the house; and at your instigation, compelled the girl into a marriage which she abhorred; I—I, her father, forced her, with a loathing heart, to the bed of a man whom she hated! God! was n’t that a noble act for a parent?’ exclaimed he, shaking his hand at Rust. ‘Well,’ continued he, ‘what came of it? It turned out as might have been expected; she had broken her vows to the man she loved; she forgot her faith to the man whom she hated. She died; and *then* it was better that she should. My wife followed her, Michael Rust; but I was a strong, iron-hearted man. It did not kill me. I was left; left, still bound to you, ay, fettered, hand and foot, in chains like iron; for I knew that the moment I broke with you, would seal my ruin. I was reckless, Michael; I was desperate; but I was *cool*. I could even play the hypocrite, and pretend to lend myself to your plans; but there came a limit at last. When you commenced your designs on that young girl, Katharine Rhoneland; young, innocent as my own child once was, *then* I resolved to shake you off. I have found the means. I have done so; and now, Michael Rust, I am your enemy; one who will thwart you, though

it cost him his life. When a man has lost all in the world except life, he cares little how soon *that* goes too.'

Rust sat opposite to him, with his eyes fixed on his face, and his thin lips pressed together; but he suffered nothing to escape him, until Enoch had finished; and then he said in his quiet, sneering tone:

'Good Enoch is excited; but he is candid, and tells his story straight and strong. There is no glossing over his words; no prevarication. His tender heart warms toward a young girl, only because she resembles his daughter; only for that reason—*only* for that reason! He has no *other* reason. He's very kind, good Enoch is; *very* kind; and now,' said he, in even a smoother voice than he had hitherto spoken, 'there is the door. Good Enoch will please to walk out of it. Michael Rust does not like enemies in his room. He prefers being alone. There's the door, good Enoch; go, *do* go!'

The other rose, and stood opposite him; and to judge from his fierce eye and quivering lip, Michael Rust ran no small risk at that moment; but he never quailed. Upright, front to front and eye to eye, he stood before the man whom he had so deeply wronged. There was indeed a momentary but powerful struggle in the breast of Enoch; but it might have been the basilisk eye of the man to whom he had so long surrendered his free-will, fixed on his own, or a secret dread of the stern, unbending spirit which animated the feeble frame before him, which had its influence; for he gradually mastered his feelings, and turning to the door, said: 'I know how we stand now, Michael Rust. The worst hate which a man feels, is hate toward one whom he has wronged. *I* know *that*, Michael. Now do *you* recollect *this*: There's no enemy so much to be dreaded as a des-

perate man. You were wise in wishing no witness to our conversation.' Without waiting for a reply, he turned on his heel and left the house.

'So' you 've bolted!' said Mr. Rust, standing with folded arms in front of the table, and apparently apostrophizing the candlestick, for on it his gaze was fastened. 'You, who could fawn, and grub, and lick the very dust from my feet: *conscientious* Enoch! What is conscience?' muttered he; 'what is that strange whispering demon, that sometimes starts up in the breast, and holds up all our past misdeeds to view, shaking them over our heads until the cheek grows pale and the heart sinks? I've heard of it; I've heard of it. Enoch knows it! FOOL!' exclaimed he, 'FOOL! he thinks to fling me off! He knows not that I have a hold on his heart, and with a single gripe can crack its life-strings. FOOL! he must bend, or I'll crush him; but not now. He's fairly hooked, and I can afford to let him play, before I drown him!'

CHAPTER VI.

WITH his head full of his schemes, Michael Rust extinguished the solitary candle, went out, shut the door, forgetting to lock it and put the key in his pocket, sought a small room in an out-of-the-way part of the city, where he was in the habit of roosting; and flinging himself on a bed which occupied a corner of it, tossed, and dreamed, and started till day-break.

On visiting his office at an early hour, he was not a little surprised to find the door unlocked, and the room occupied by a person, who, after an attentive and careful conning over of all the strange characters which lay hid in out-of-the-way corners of his memory, he was fully convinced had never before crossed his path. He was a queer-looking fellow, clad in a suit of rusty black, here and there faded into a dusky red, and variegated with occasional rents, through some of which might be caught glimpses of a dingy white under-garment, while through another, a small end of the same vestment hung pendant, like a pocket-handkerchief. A bell-crowned hat, dusty, faded and storm-worn, roofed an odd-looking face, apparently set in a frame of uncombed locks, and garnished with a black beard of several days' growth, so stiff and stubborn that a hedge-hog might have envied it.

It was the employment of the man, as much as his appearance, which surprised Michael Rust; for *there*, in the middle of Rust's own office, with one foot on Rust's own chair, and with Rust's blacking and brush, kept for his own special

use, when either inclination or policy required an unusual degree of neatness in his appearance, stood this man, cleaning his boots with as much nonchalance as if he were owner of the room, and the brushes, blacking, and chair were his own appurtenances. On the same chair with his foot was a large snuff-box, from which he from time to time refreshed himself during the progress of his operations.

He did not observe Rust, as he came in; but kept on snuffing, and rubbing, and muttering; sometimes pausing and laughing to himself, and winking at nobody, and shaking his head, and favoring his trowsers with a dab from the same brush with which he was polishing his boot, whenever his eye rested on a spot which he thought would be benefited by such an operation. Nor did he cease, until Rust touched him on the arm, and said, in a peremptory manner: 'Hallo! Sir! who are you? and what are you doing here?'

'Thunder! man, how you made me jump!' exclaimed the stranger, verifying his remark, by dropping his brush and starting up. 'When you are going to startle a man in that way, just let him know beforehand, will you? Suppose my nerves had been weak? or I had been in a delicate way? or any thing of that sort? What might have been the consequence? Think of that!'

Rust, in no wise mollified by the peculiar light in which the stranger viewed his interruption, again demanded: 'What are you doing here?'

'Can't you *see*?' replied the other, pointing to his boot; '*that's* what I'm doing.'

'Ho! ho!' exclaimed Rust, his usual sneer playing around his thin lips, 'you mistook this room for a boot-black's shop, did you? It looks like one; *very* like one, does n't it? but it *is* n't; upon my word it is n't. Now, Sir,' said he, 'since you have discovered your error, be good enough to go; or I

may be obliged to do what I should be very sorry to do — *very* sorry — put you out.'

The stranger looked at him for a moment or two, as he stood bowing and pointing to the door, with his lips curled in anger and derision, and then suddenly thrusting his hand in his pocket, and smirking and winking, he sidled up to Rust: 'Come, come,' said he, 'I know what you 're at. I take. *There.*' Thrusting a sixpence in Rust's hand, he favored him with a succession of sudden winks and shakes of the head; at the same time indulging a kind of inward laugh. 'Say nothing more,' said he; 'we understand each other.' With this remark, he took a pinch of snuff from his box, picked up the brush, and resumed his labors.

Rust was puzzled; for his guest was evidently one of those impracticable fellows who neither get angry themselves, nor believe others when *they* are so. Had he been a little less strongly built, he might have been thrust out by main force; but there was a squareness about his shoulders, indicative of strength; his hands too were large, and his wrists thick and bony. So that Rust was fain to moderate his tone; and going to him, he said: 'Come, come, my good fellow, you 'd better go.' As he spoke, he placed his hand on his back, as if to urge him toward the door.

'No I had n't — no I had n't,' replied the other, again turning and winking. 'Do n't be frightened; I wo'n't desert you: never desert any body; got plenty of friends — never desert any of 'em. Catch me at it! — would n't hurt their feelings for the world.' He shut his eyes, and laughed inwardly for more than a minute, at the bare thought of it.

Rust, seeing that his guest had determined to have his own way, and thinking that it might be best to humor him, took a seat, and looking at him, said:

'Well, Sir, since you wo'n't quit the room, perhaps you 'll at least tell me who you are?'

'To be sure I will; my name is Kornicker; Edward Kornicker; K-O-R-N-I-C-K-E-R,' replied the stranger, spelling it. 'Ah! I see, you do n't want that sixpence,' continued he, pointing to the coin which Rust had placed on the chair. 'Well, if you 're proud, others ain't; that 's all.' Saying which, he quietly deposited the piece in his vest-pocket. 'As for the matter of my being in your office, I do n't see that it is such a wonderful room, that you need be chary of it; not but what I am as good, if not better, than that fellow Grosket, whom I met coming out of it last night.'

Such had been the nature of the conversation between Rust and Grosket, that even the bare mention of his name caused him to start; and scarcely knowing that he did so, he went to the door and locked it.

'Come, come, man!' exclaimed Kornicker, not altogether pleased by this equivocal action, 'what are you at? I 'll stand no nonsense. I 'm not frightened, Sir; I 'm afraid of no man; and if you intend to practise any of your tricks on me, I 'll cram this brush down your throat. Yes, I will; yes, I will. If I do n't——'

He concluded his remark by a pantomime, in which flourishes of the brush, shakes of the head, and winks at Rust, bore a prominent part. 'I hope you understand,' added he; 'if you do n't, and want to come to extremities, you 'll find your ideas polished in a way that will astonish you; let me tell you that.'

Saying this, he threw himself in a defensive attitude, with the brush grasped in one hand, and the fist of the other clenched, as if ready to fulfil either of his menaces. Michael Rust eyed him without any appearance of apprehension; and then, crossing his hands behind him, walked up and down the room in deep thought; coming in close proximity to the article which Kornicker still held up, but without any attempt to enforce his threat. At last he said:

‘Sit down ; I want to talk with you.’

Kornicker, after looking at him for some time, and apparently coming to the conclusion that he had no ulterior views respecting himself, threw the brush on the floor, and having seated himself, held his snuff-box in his hand, at the same time looking at him to begin.

‘So your name is Kornicker?’ said Rust, for the purpose of opening the conversation. ‘It’s an odd name.’

Kornicker gave a loud rap with the knuckle of his middle finger on his box ; removed the cover ; took a pinch between his thumb and finger, and leaning forward refreshed his nose in a vociferous manner ; after which he said that he had heard others make that same remark.

‘You’re a lawyer, I suppose?’ said Mr. Rust.

Mr. Kornicker nodded.

‘Much to do?’ inquired Mr. Rust.

Kornicker shook his head, and said ; ‘Not much ; every body’s gone to smash ; and I among the rest. It’s the fashion ; I always follow the fashion.’

‘You have an office?’ said Rust.

‘Have I?’ said Mr. Kornicker, in a tone of surprised inquiry. ‘If I have, I’ll be glad if you’ll find it, for *I* can’t. When you *do*, be good enough to send me the key, and the number of the house.’

Rust rose abruptly, and folding his hands behind him again walked up and down the room, with his brows bent. Indeed, so long did he continue this exercise, that Kornicker, who had at first watched him, under a vague apprehension that he either might have something to say relative to the office just mentioned, or might be harboring a secret purpose to commit a second assault upon him, came to the conclusion that he cherished neither of these intentions, and lapsed into a fit of profound abstraction, staring with eyes exceedingly

wide open into the black grate, and apparently thinking of nothing.

For ten or fifteen minutes at least, Michael Rust paced that room; at intervals pausing, and scanning from head to foot his guest, who no longer noticed him; dwelling with a look of earnest and intense scrutiny upon his face, and then turning off, and resuming his walk, only to pause at another short interval, to resume his investigation of Mr. Kornicker's countenance and person. During that short walk, he had formed and was maturing a plan which in any other person would have seemed strange indeed, but which was nothing unusual in a man who frequently formed and carried out purposes on the spur of the moment, and seemed to have an almost intuitive knowledge of the character of those who fell under his eye.

The rupture between Grosket and himself had taken place at a most inauspicious moment for him; for he had schemes on foot in which a tool was needed, who had no eyes, nor ears, nor conscience, except those of his employer, and who had energy sufficient to carry out his purposes, whatever they might be. All this Grosket had been; but now that all further connection between them was broken off, he knew him too well to suppose for an instant that it would be renewed. The recollection of the cause assigned by Grosket for this step, and his parting threat, coupled with the daring character of the man, occasionally crossed Rust's mind like a dark shadow; but still he did not shrink from carrying out his schemes, for he thought that Grosket was too deeply implicated with him, to dare to betray him. Long-cherished plans were not to be relinquished for a single threat; nor was he, who had hitherto been his slave, to rise up and dictate to him what course to pursue. Rust's thin lips worked nervously, and his eye flashed at the

thought; as it did so, it again rested on Kornicker; and his mind was made up to secure *him*, to supply as far as possible the place of Grosket. It was true that he knew nothing about him, and what little he saw was not in his favor; but he appeared to be a thoughtless, thriftless fellow, out at the elbows; probably poor, and one who would snatch at any opportunity of improving his condition. Moreover, he seemed to lack that energy which would induce him to resist his will. 'As to his being a stranger,' he muttered, glancing about the room; 'or suppose him to be dishonest, what then? There is nothing to steal; and he will be less scrupulous in doing what I want. Perhaps I can make it his interest to keep faith with me, and if so, what care I though he play rascal with all the rest of the world? I need not trust until I've tried him.' Full of this purpose, he sat down beside his visitor.

'Mr. Kornicker,' said he, in a friendly tone, 'I'm a plain man, and will speak plainly what I have to say. Should it not meet your views, you must not take it amiss. It's well meant.'

Mr. Kornicker made no other reply than the very indefinite one of looking him very full in the face.

'From your appearance, and from what you have just said,' continued Rust, 'I am led to believe that times are not as well with you as they have been. Now I have a proposal to make. I want a person to attend to certain business of mine; a kind of agent. I think you might suit me. Will you accept the situation? There's the offer — plump.'

'Do I know any thing about the business?' inquired Kornicker, arousing himself, and looking very much in earnest.

'I'll risk that,' answered Rust.

'What are the terms?'

'Twenty dollars a month, and your meals; but not lodging,' replied Rust, laconically.

'Any objection to my sleeping here?' inquired Kornicker, looking about the room. 'It's small, though.'

'None,' replied Rust; 'but there's no bed, and no room for one.'

'Leave that to me,' said Mr. Kornicker. 'I've experience in that line. Now, then, as to the other items. Where am I to dine?'

'There's a refectory in the basement of this house. You can dine there.'

'Good!' said Mr. Kornicker, taking a pinch of snuff. 'I suppose you would n't object to a friend or two dining with me.'

'I would decidedly,' replied Mr. Rust, in a peremptory tone; for he saw from the manner of his listener that he could afford to be strict in the terms.

'Say *one*, one at long intervals,' added Kornicker, seeing Rust preparing to refuse; 'at *very* long intervals; little eternities.'

'You must have none,' replied Rust, bluntly.

'Would a small boy, sitting on the opposite side of the table, merely to be looked at, be open to the same objection? I hate a solitary dinner. I'm gregarious in my habits and feelings.'

'Mr. Kornicker,' said Rust, abruptly, 'if you come into my service, you must come on my terms, not on yours. I've made an offer; accept or reject it, as you please. I sha'n't vary it.'

'Thunder! man, how hot you are!' exclaimed Kornicker; 'well, a meal by one's self is a dull affair; but nevertheless, with wine, beer, and brandy-and-water, it may be tolerated.'

'Stop,' said Rust, in the same peremptory tone, 'these are

not in the agreement. Drink of all kinds, except water, I do n't pay for.'

'Oh! come! that's too much! I'll not stand that!' said Mr. Kornicker, indignantly. 'You're running you pony too hard, my man. No drink, no bargain.'

'Be it so,' replied Rust, rising. 'Then our agreement is at an end. Good day, Sir.'

Kornicker, however, did not stir; but after looking at Rust for a few moments, in an irresolute manner, said in an insinuating tone:

'Do n't you think we might compromise about the drinks? They might be taken quite weak, and at long intervals. It does n't look respectable to dine without calling for something.'

One of his usual sneering replies was rising to Rust's lips; but he had an end to gain; so he checked himself, and answered in a serious manner: 'I am afraid, Mr. Kornicker, from what I see, that you are too much in this very habit of calling for wine; and I am too much your friend, to aid you in injuring yourself. Therefore I must persist in my refusal.'

'Then I am to understand,' said Mr. Kornicker, in a slow, deliberate voice, 'that friends in every variety, including a small boy, and drinks of all kinds, excepting miserable, meagre, undiluted water, are all prohibited? I suppose,' said he, with a wo-begone attempt at a smile, 'I may put a little salt in it, to destroy its unpleasant freshness?'

'Oh! yes,' replied Mr. Rust, with a sneer, 'or even add mustard.'

'How is it about snuff?' asked Kornicker, abruptly; 'I *must* have snuff.'

'I'll supply you with that,' said Rust.

Well, there's a comfort in that. I agree to the terms. And now, Sir,' said he, with more energy than he had hitherto shown, 'what am I to do?'

‘You are to stay here when I am absent. If any one calls, you are to hear what he has to say, though you ’ll be seldom troubled in that way. As you ’re a lawyer, I may also want your services in a professional way. In short, you are to do whatever I ask, without hesitation and without question.’

‘The saving clause to that contract is very comprehensive,’ said Mr. Kornicker; ‘but,’ *thought* he, ‘if he comes it over me too strong, I ’ll bolt. Let him sue me for a breach of contract.’ The idea of such a step presented itself to Mr. Kornicker’s mind in such a ludicrous light, that he laughed and winked and shook his head, until the tears fairly ran down his cheeks. After recovering from this paroxysm, he again expressed his determination to accept the terms.

‘Very well,’ said Rust; ‘I ’m going out now, and may not return to-day; perhaps not for a week, nor a month. You must be here every day, from nine in the morning until seven in the evening. Whenever I come, you must be found here.’

‘Very well,’ said Mr. Kornicker; ‘I understand. You ’ll not forget to speak to the man in the refectory. The contract dates from now.’

‘I ’ll stop as I go out,’ said Rust.

‘And the twenty dollars?’

‘Shall be forthcoming at the end of the month,’ replied Rust. ‘If I am not here, the money will come in a letter on the very day.’

‘There ’s no objection to my making a fire, I suppose?’ said Mr. Kornicker, pointing to the grate, which was filled with all the necessary materials, and required merely the application of a match to ignite them. ‘Must be kept warm; *must* be; that ’s part of the contract.’

‘Make what fire you please,’ said Rust, as he was turning to go. ‘You ’ll find coal in the vault.’

'You're quite certain we can't arrange our little differences about the trimmings to the dinners, and the friends?'

'Quite,' said Rust, abruptly; and shutting the door, he went out.

'A queer dog,' said Kornicker, shaking his head; 'but small about the liquor; *damned* small! But let's look to the fire; there's nothing here to help one. Perhaps there *is*, next door.' Taking up the candlestick, and going into a neighboring office, which he was fortunate enough to find open, he obtained a light, and with its assistance soon had a bright fire blazing in the grate, and seated himself in front of it.

Probably few persons could contemplate any object for a greater length of time without knowing it, or caring about it, or thinking about it, or any thing else in particular, than Mr. Edward Kornicker, provided he was warm. And this being the case at present, he sat with his hands in his pockets, his legs straight in front of him, his feet resting on the ash-pan under the grate, and his eyes fixed upon his own boots with a desperately wide-awake stare, but utterly unconscious of every thing about him, except that he was snug and comfortable. This state he occasionally diversified by a short nap, which he enjoyed without any change of position or variation of any kind, except that of closing his eyes. Awaking from one of these slight interludes, he sat up, rubbed his eyes, and looked about the room, then at the fire, and relapsed into a profound reverie.

'Not a single gentleman of my acquaintance excepted,' soliloquized he, thoughtfully; 'liquors prohibited, even an embargo laid on beer. Food, plain, vulgar *food* alone, at discretion. Well, the eating-house is near the door,' said he, looking about him; 'there's a comfort in that. The bane and antidote cheek by jowl; very handy. Even a call

from the window would bring a boy from the refectory. Let's try, for the fun of it.'

By way of making the experiment, Mr. Kornicker raised the sash, and thrusting his head out of the window, called in a loud voice, 'Hallo!'

His call was answered from every part of the building; and with particular emphasis from the region of the desperadoes.

'A wonderful spot for echoes,' said he, meditatively. 'I should think there were twenty at least. There's plenty of angles; perhaps that makes ^{them}; or perhaps the stove-pipes or chimneys; there's plenty of *them*, too; or the windows, or——'

His farther investigation of the cause was interrupted by the head of a boy, which was thrust from a window on the ground-floor, with the face turned upward.

'Are you the refectory boy?' inquired Mr. Kornicker, looking down in turn.

The head nodded.

'Very well, come up here; I want you.'

The head nodded again, and was withdrawn; an example which Mr. Kornicker immediately followed. Scarcely had he resumed his seat at the fire, when there was a knock at the door. 'Come in,' said he; and without even turning to look at the door, as it opened, he said:

'You're the boy I saw just now, are you?'

The boy nodded; a gesture which his questioner took for granted, as he did not even look round.

'And you belong to that eating-house below, do you?'

Again the boy nodded; which reply, as before, was taken for granted.

'Well, my little fellow,' said Mr. Kornicker, now turning, 'did any gentleman call in there to-day, and say any thing

about paying the score of any other gentleman, whenever he chose to stop there, or call for any thing, or some trifle of that sort?’

Again the boy nodded, and said: ‘Oh! yes; the gentleman, Mr. Rust,’ said he, pointing to the name on the door; ‘and he said, whenever a man named Kornicker, that’s you, I suppose,’ said he, with an inquiring nod.

‘Yes, that’s me; well?’

‘Well, whenever you came, you was to have just what you wanted, except liquors or ales; wittles, whenever you liked; and he would pay the shot. That’s what he said.’

‘You’re sure it was n’t the dinner that was restricted, and the liquor and ale at discretion?’

‘*Very* sure,’ said the boy; ‘he was very partikler; and he said too, it was only meals for one; no friends.’

‘I know it,’ replied Kornicker, with a melancholy shake of the head; ‘I know it. It was n’t considerate nor delicate; but I suppose it’s his way; and I suppose another one of them is to let nobody have his way but himself. Well, well! Did he say any thing about the cooking?’

The boy shook his head.

‘Very well; go down and order me a beef-steak stewed in wine; plenty of the wine. I’ll be down presently. That’s all. Make the sauce strong; do n’t forget *that*.’

The boy nodded, showed his teeth, and closing the door, clattered down the stairs.

‘Wine diluted with steak is a miserable beverage, very miserable; but it’s better than nothing,’ said Kornicker, resuming his seat at the fire. ‘I wonder who this Rust is; what he does, and what he wants of me? Well, I suppose he’ll let me know some day. He’s a strange fellow; twenty dollars, fire and meals; and all for sitting in front of a fire, with nothing to do but look at one’s toes, and put on coal;

but he was *small* about the wine and friends, decidedly small. Snuff however, *ad libitum*; that's something.' This having called to his recollection that he had a supply of that article about his person, he drew out his snuff-box, and proceeded to extract from it sundry small pinches, which he deposited in various parts of the office; this being one of his peculiar modes of distributing his stock of that article, so that he might always find it wherever he went, without the trouble of drawing out his box. This employment he continued, until it struck him that the order which he had sent to the eating-house must be executed; and he accordingly locked the office, and went out for the purpose of ascertaining the fact.

CHAPTER VII.

LEAVING Mr. Kornicker in possession of his office, and having kept his promise of making an arrangement for the regular supply of that gentleman's meals, subject to the restrictions before mentioned, Michael Rust bent his steps toward the upper part of the city.

It might have been a knowledge of the great intrinsic worth of the individual whose services he had just secured; or it might have been a feeling of relief at having all ties dissolved between himself and his formidable tool, Grosket; or it might have been even the insignificant circumstance of his having driven a close bargain respecting the aforesaid supply of Mr. Kornicker's meals; or of his having facetiously boxed the ears of a small beggar who had ventured to insinuate to him that his funds were low, and that a donation of a few coppers would not come amiss; or it might have been some other equally trifling and unimportant occurrence which shed such a glow over his pleasant countenance, and caused his step to become so firm and elastic and his pace so rapid. But *something* there certainly was; for on he went, at a fast walk, smiling to himself, and looking neither to the right nor left, until he found himself in front of a house in the eastern part of the city, with a green door, which boasted two narrow side-lights, and a huge knocker, like a countenance garnished with a pair of small eyes and a stout nose. A small tin sign reminded the public at large, in gilt letters, that persons boarded there cheap, while a slip of paper stuck beneath, as a kind of codicil to the sign, men-

tioned what the sign had left untold; namely, that there was an unfurnished room on the second floor in the rear, in which two single gentlemen, or a double one, in the form of a man and his other half, would find themselves quite comfortable. Without pausing to notice these trifles, Rust rubbed his feet across a small heap of mud, the nucleus of which was an undersized mat, which lay in front of the door, and applying his hand to the knocker, succeeded in calling to the door a red-faced girl, with her hair hanging over her face, and her shoes down at the heel.

Without speaking, Rust pushed past her and ascended to a small front room in the second story. It was a dark, dreary room, partly owing to its being in a narrow street, and to the windows being small, and partly owing to the fact that they had been for a long time on very distant terms with water of all kinds, except the occasional drops which had settled there in a shower. Rust, however, was too much accustomed to every thing about him, to notice its defects; and without bestowing a thought upon them, he proceeded to disrobe himself. He flung his hat upon the bed; his cloak followed; and untying his handkerchief, he shook his black locks in disorder about his face.

Slight as the alteration in his dress was, it produced a great change in his looks; removing its character of sharpness and cunning, and giving it one of bold and reckless ferocity. He then removed his other garments, and substituted in their place those of a newer and more fashionable appearance; and having completed his toilet to his own satisfaction, he surveyed himself in the glass.

‘That will do,’ muttered he; ‘even my own dear affectionate mother, whom I never saw, but who doubtless was a very decent, well-behaved woman in her way, would not know me. Ha! ha! I scarcely know myself. I shall be

obliged to hang a label on my neck, for fear I should forget who I am. This is all as it should be. Let each of those with whom I have to deal, if need be, describe the Michael Rust who crossed his path. There are wheels within wheels, each apparently having its own aim; all disconnected, yet all leading to the same result; and there is a Michael Rust setting each in motion. But each Michael Rust is different. And that, *that*,' added he, pointing in the glass, 'is the man, who has his cards to play with one Jacob Rhoneland and his bright-eyed daughter, and the lout who hangs about her, like a moth around a candle; but I'll singe his wings! God!' said he, with a sudden, fierce burst of bitter wrath, 'I'll crush him, though I die! There are others too,' said he, almost immediately recovering his calmness, 'there are *others* too. I must watch; nothing must escape me. I must not fail. I will not! I *will* not! And they, the blind fools! shall find it out some day to their cost. How I can wheedle them, and talk to them of love, generosity, friendship, fine feelings! Ha! ha! What glorious sounds these are for men to truckle to; ay, for *men*; strong-minded, far-sighted, clear-headed *men*. Yes, I've seen *them* yield their free-will, sacrifice themselves and their fortunes for a mere empty whim, and call it generosity; the fools, the slaves, the bondmen; ay, of a worse bondage than that of shackled limbs — that of a fettered mind. Well,' continued he, in the same musing tone, and standing with folded arms and with his eyes bent on the floor, 'it's human nature, and it's convenient for me. I know them; one, two, three, four; all slaves; each wedded to his own particular folly. Rhoneland, one; gold is his god. Somers, two; he bows to bright eyes, pouting lips, and a snowy bosom; forgetting that old age, sickness, and the earth-worm prey on the same food. Grosket — Enoch Grosket — of all fools the greatest! I bought him — *bought*

him, paid down the gold, to make a tool of him — *merely* to make a tool of him; I had but to whisper in his ear of gratitude, and he swallowed the bait; and I have led him at will for five long years. But he's gone now, and has grown dangerous, and must be looked to. There's one more,' muttered he, passing his hand thoughtfully across his brow; 'clear-headed, with an eye that sees through trickery, and almost lifts the veil from a man's heart. Him I fear the most. With him I have the deepest game to play, and one in which detection is ruin. He trusts me now fully — implicitly — should he left the veil — all is lost.'

Drawing a chair to the fire, Rust seated himself, remaining for a long time in deep abstraction; and during that interval a change seemed to have come over the current of his thoughts; for he said, speaking in the same low, broken, abrupt manner which he had used before:

'So the cub's jealous! How he watches me when I trifle with the girl; clenching his big fists, and twisting his fingers one in the other; his eyes flashing and his cheek reddening. But for one thing, which *he* knows, and which *I* know, he would fall on me and crush every bone in my body. Bah! but I have him. He may writhe, and wince, and threaten; but that's his limit. Could I drive him beyond *that* — could I *but* drive him beyond that ——! But,' said he, suddenly starting up, 'the day is waning, and there is work yet to be done.'

He went to a closet, and took from it a hat and great-coat; after which he rang the bell. It was answered by the same slip-shod girl who had admitted him from the street.

'Has Mr. Grosket, or any one else, been here for me?' inquired he.

'Not Mr. Grosket,' replied the girl.

'Any one else?'

'A strange man came here to-day,' said the girl, hesitating;
'a — a —'

'Gentleman?'

The girl shook her head.

'What did he look like? A mechanic? a laborer? a beggar? or what?' inquired Rust, impatiently.

'A ruffen, Sir; a downright ruffen,' replied the girl, with a discrimination of character which perhaps her situation as maid-of-all-work at a public lodging-house had sharpened to a high degree of nicety. 'One of the sort of people who sometimes come here of dark nights, you know; who don't like to be seen in the day-time — one of *them*;' and she nodded to Rust, in a significant manner, intimating that although her language might not be accurate, still her meaning was sufficiently clear.

Rust looked her full in the face, without making any remark upon her comment on the character of his visitor, and apparently without even noticing it. Then he asked:

'Did he leave his name?'

Again the girl shook her head.

'Nor his business?'

'He said as he went off, that he was sorry you were away; and that if you knew all he did, you'd be the most sorry of the two. He said he need n't call again; for you'd find it out what he had to tell soon enough for all the fun it would give you; and then he laughed to himself, and went off. That's all,' said the girl, after a pause.

Rust evinced no appearance of surprise nor uneasiness at this communication, but merely asked:

'Any one else?'

'No one.'

'Very well; you can go.'

The door closed on the girl, but Rust remained standing.

‘More trouble? Well, well; let it come. I have that *here*,’ said he, pressing his fingers on his forehead, ‘that laughs at it. I may be crushed; and there are those things doing now in which failure and perdition to me go hand in hand; but I’ll never bend! And now Kate, bright, laughing Kate Rhoneland, you and I must meet, and then we’ll see what will come of it!’

Shutting the door, he slowly descended the stairs and went into the street. His destination was the abode of Jacob Rhoneland. It was a long way off, yet the time flew by so rapidly to the scheming man, that scarce a moment seemed to have elapsed before he found himself in front of the old man’s dwelling.

Michael Rust was a man who did not trouble himself with useless ceremony, particularly where it might interfere with his ends; and as he deemed it not unlikely that a knock at the door might result in a denial of admittance, when it was discovered that he was the visitor, he prudently determined to dispense with so useless a ceremony; and so quietly admitted himself into the house, and went to the room usually occupied by Rhoneland. Finding no one there, he proceeded to the adjoining one, where he discovered Kate Rhoneland engaged in sewing.

‘Father is not at home,’ said she, anticipating the question which he was preparing to ask.

‘Perhaps not, perhaps not,’ said he, entering the room without the slightest hesitation, and placing his hat on the floor; ‘but *you* are, Kate, and I’m not sorry for it. Ah!’ said he, drawing a chair near her, and taking a seat, ‘it does one good to see you, and to talk with you, when the old man is away. Ha! little Kate, how he watches you! He knows that you are his golden apple, and that this room is quite a garden of the Hesperides when you are in it. It only

wants the old man just now, to play the part of dragon, to complete the simile. By the way,' said he, dusting his boots with his handkerchief, 'there are two dragons here; an old one and a cub-dragon; Somers, I think you call him.'

There were moments and themes which could bring the fire into Kate Rhoneland's eyes, and the red blood of anger into her face; and this was one of them. The free and familiar air of her visitor, coupled with her dislike of him, and with the slighting manner in which he spoke of her father and of Somers, had brought to her lips a retort which might have proved unacceptable to him, callous as he was. But at the same moment came the recollection of the almost constant injunction of her father, that she should be careful not to offend him. 'Do n't break with him, Kate; do n't incense him, or he'll ruin me,' were the words which were for ever ringing in her ears, and which now restrained her; but rising she said: 'You must excuse 'the apple' just now, Mr. Rust, as she has to see that the garden is kept in proper order.'

Michael Rust rose and bowed, laying his hand upon his heart, with an air of profound reverence, as he said: 'Certainly, my pretty Kate; who can refuse any thing to Kate Rhoneland? Surely, not Michael Rust. I shall be miserably dull without you; miserably dull. Bah! go, you silly jade!' said he, as the door closed. 'Ah! here comes the cub-dragon. I'll make the most of him, until the old one comes in.'

The concluding remark was caused by the opening of another door, and the entrance of Ned Somers.

'Mr. Rhoneland's not here, I see,' said he, looking around.

'No, he's not,' replied Rust; 'but sit down, Ned, sit down,' said he, in a tone whose civility was blended with so much sarcasm, that Somers found it a matter of no small difficulty to restrain himself from knocking him down on the spot.

‘Why *don’t* you sit down, my dear young friend? Chairs are plenty; and as you have just driven the sweetest little girl in the world from this room by your inopportune arrival, there is another one to spare. It was cruel of you to drop in as you did, and interrupt one of the most cosy and endearing chats I ever had. She’s a tempting little witch, Ned; ah! she’s a darling! I shall wake up yet some day and find myself married; I’m sure I shall, if I come here often.’

Ned Somers, who had taken a seat, grew exceedingly red, and moved uneasily in his chair, and for a moment his eyes flashed; but he observed the look of triumphant malice which stole from beneath the half-closed lids of the other; and the slight, sneering smile that played around the corner of his mouth; and he recollected the noble singleness of heart of Kate Rhoneland, and he felt that the insinuations of Rust were false.

With the intuitive sagacity which was a striking feature of his character, Rust saw that there was some process of thought going on in the mind of Somers, that was allaying the angry feelings which he was anxious to excite; and as it was a part of a plan that he had formed to drive him if possible to an assault upon himself, he kept on in the same sneering manner:

‘Mrs. Rust; Mrs. Michael Rust!’ The name sounds well; and for *her* I might hazard the experiment.’

‘Why did you never hazard it before? You are getting gray. But perhaps you *have*, and think it dangerous,’ said Somers, quietly.

The remark was merely a casual one on the part of Somers, and intended to divert Rust from his present theme; but its effect was electrical. He had taken a seat, and he now sprang up; his eyes flashing, his lips quivering and livid with rage, and his black hair fairly stiff with fury.

'D — n! d — n you!' shrieked he, shaking both fists in the face of Somers; 'what do you mean? If you have—— But no; no——!'

With a suddenness almost equal to that with which his anger came on, it passed off, and he said in a voice strangely calmed:

'You don't know Kate as I do. I was afraid that you had whispered odd stories in her ear; but she would n't listen to them if you did. She *must* love me, or she would not lavish on me all those little endearments which she does, and which find their way to the heart, and which it is impossible to describe; and if she loves me, she won't believe you, Ned. But you won't betray what I am telling you, of our trifling love-passages? Kate would die of confusion if she knew that I had even whispered of them. Come, come,' said he, taking Somers by the hand, 'promise, will you? It is so unusual a thing for a young girl like her to doat as she does upon a man so much older than herself as I am, that it has made me quite vain and silly; but you will not betray our mutual weaknesses, Ned, will you?'

Although this was spoken in a low, soft tone, there was something in the look which accompanied it, and in the evident intention of the speaker to gall and irritate, which had nearly made it successful; and for a moment Somers wavered; but it was only for a moment; for the next instant the whole scene and the manner of Rust struck him as irresistibly ludicrous, and he burst out into a hearty laugh:

'No, no, Rust,' said he, 'I'll betray nothing; you're welcome to your love-passages. But I must go. I came here to see the old man; and as he's not at home, I must seek him; for what I have to say will not brook delay.'

As he went out, he turned and said: 'Try it again, Rust, now that the coast is clear. Go it strong on the 'love-pas-

sages,' not forgetting the 'little endearments.' She's a tempting morsel for an old man. Good bye, Michael; good bye!' And with another merry laugh, he shut the door.

'Foiled!' exclaimed Rust, 'and by a boy! But where could he have picked up *that*? Was it accident, or did he *dream* it? Or could he have learned that sad secret from the only one who knew it? Well, well; there's misery in it, but that's all. He and this girl are in league,' said he, abruptly, 'but the old man is mine; and through him I'll bend her, and crush *his* stubborn heart. How I long to have it under my feet, that I may grind it to the dirt! But the game's up for to-day, and I'll go.'

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. SNORK was sitting in front of a smouldering fire in his attic, (for unlike his friend Mrs. Blossom, he was aspiring in his ideas, and preferred a garret to a cellar,) with his head bound up in a faded cotton handkerchief, a short pipe in his mouth, and a beard of a week's growth ornamenting the lower part of his face. Although it was late in the day, the disordered state of his attire showed that he had but recently quitted his bed; or at all events, that he had not yet made his morning toilet. He was in a moralizing mood too; for he sat in silence, looking at the loose strings in his shoes, and occasionally scratching his head through the handkerchief just mentioned. It was evident that he was at that moment laboring under great absence of mind; for although his pipe was unlighted, he puffed at it assiduously, occasionally withdrawing it from his mouth to permit an imaginary cloud of smoke to escape.

On the opposite side of the fire-place sat Mrs. Snork, a fat, redfaced woman, her head surmounted by a dirty cap, bedizened with red and yellow ribands, from beneath which straggled a few locks of deep red hair. Her eyes were of a bright aqua-marine color, and her nose doubtless had once been well formed, although that fact could then only be ascertained from tradition, from the circumstance of its having been crushed in, flat to her face. Her teeth were white and strong, with the exception of the two front ones, which were missing, probably having retired at the same time that her nose changed its condition.

Mrs. Snork evidently was participating in the feeling of gloom and perplexity which weighed so heavily upon the spirits of her husband; for she too was silent, biting her lips and occasionally her nails, with an expression of mingled vexation and anxiety.

Mr. Snork at intervals raised his eyes to her face, with an air of investigation and deference; as if desirous of arriving at the result of her deliberations before venturing to express his own. At length, by way of sounding her, he exhaled a long sigh, and muttered with deep emphasis:

‘Our sickliest child! Had it’a been the hump-back, or the infant with a scald-head, I could ha’ borne it; but for it to be this one, this identical one, the sickliest of them all, is dreadful aggravating to the feelings. It had got through the mumps, and the measles, and the hooping-cough, and its double-teeth ——’

‘And the small-pox,’ added Mrs. Snork, parenthetically.

‘And was n’t subject to hives, nor fits; and yet was so very sickly, without our being afraid of its dying. It was an uncommon tough child, it was. It was as tough as — as — as ——’

‘Jonah,’ suggested the lady.

Was *he* tough?’ asked Mr. Snork; ‘*very* tough?’

‘To be sure he was,’ replied his wife. ‘Did n’t a whale try three whole days to digest him, and could n’t?’

‘As Jonah, resumed Mr. Snork; ‘and *such* a stomach! My eyes! what a stomach! I’ve heerd of ostrich’s stomachs, but if one of them’ere animals, with the tallest kind of a stomach, had come across that child, he would have died of sheer spite. He could n’t have held a candle to *her*. Why, she could do just what she pleased with it. She could be sick at it whenever she liked. Ten times in one arfternoon I’ve *known* her to be. She was worth two dollars a day, at the

very least; and now she's gone; gone, never to return. Cuss that House of Refuge! How it walks into the best affections of one's natur'!

So affected was Mr. Snork by the mournful reflections which crowded his mind, that after several hard gulps, he dashed the back of his hand across his eyes; and applying a lighted coal to the bowl of his pipe, smoked for five minutes, in a state of profound taciturnity.

'Why, that child ——' resumed he, after a pause.

'We've had enough of that there,' interrupted Mrs. Snork, who being of a more energetic nature than her husband, deemed it unnecessary to waste farther time in lamentation, wisely judging that all additional indulgence of that kind would probably be only lacerating to their feelings, without having any beneficial effect upon the obnoxious sanctuary before mentioned. 'She's gone, and she wo'n't come back; and there's an end of it.'

This, probably, would not have been the end of it, had not the lady decided that it should be; but that settled the question; and Mr. Snork, finding that farther discussion on that subject would not be admissible, placed his pipe in his mouth and smoked in silence, waiting for some indication from his better half as to the turn which she wished the conversation to take.

'You said Mrs. Blossom had two new ones?' said Mrs. Snork, after a pause, casting an inquiring eye upon her husband, and at the same time drawing her chair near the fire.

'*Such* ones!' ejaculated the man, removing his pipe, only sufficiently to make room for the words to escape, and instantly replacing it.

'A boy and girl?' inquired the woman.

Snork nodded.

'Who are they? Where did they come from?'

In reply to this, the man merely shrugged his shoulders, with a very slight shake of the head, indicating profound ignorance.

The woman looked at him for some moments with extreme dissatisfaction either at his limited information or at his having made no greater efforts to increase it; but before she had time to give vent to this feeling in any other manner, a step was heard on the stairs. Snork rose, glanced at the door with a quick suspicious look, and then round the room, as if fearful that something might be seen there which he did not wish to submit to general inspection.

'It's bolted and barred,' muttered he, in reply to a look of his wife. 'Even if it was n't, what then?' said he, looking about him. 'It's a very respectable kind of a room, very.' Having arrived at this conclusion, he went to the door, removed the bar, and drew back the bolt, just as a knock was heard from without.

'Come in,' said Mrs. Snork, seating herself in such a position as to convey the idea that she had not changed her position for the last half hour, at the very least, while Mr. Snork merely opened the door ajar, and reconnoitered their visitor through the crack. 'Pshaw!' said he, flinging it wide open, 'it's only Mrs. Blossom.'

With this somewhat disparaging observation, Snork turned on his héel, and leaving his visitor to enter and shut the door after her, walked to the fire-place, in front of which he seated himself, without condescending to make any farther observation. Nor was it until then that he observed the expression of quiet self-complacency which usually marked the countenance of his guest, had been displaced by one of anxiety and alarm.

'How now, old woman?' exclaimed he, as this discovery forced itself upon him. 'Who's dead, or murdered? Has the cripple run away, or the dumb boy informed agin you?

or is the North River a-fire, or what? Out with it! Cuss me! but I *do* believe she is going to faint! Mrs. S., just hand out that brandy, will you?’

The woman thus addressed, apparently sympathizing with the unknown trouble of her visitor, and perhaps not a little actuated by a feeling of curiosity to know more, hastened to fill a small cup with the liquor, and to place it to the lips of Mrs. Blossom, who, notwithstanding her appearance of exhaustion, drained it off without remark, and wiped her lips with the back of her hand, with evident satisfaction.

‘Now then, you feel better, don’t you?’ said Mr. Snork, whose awe of his wife seemed to wear off in company. ‘What’s the muss? Let’s have it.’

Mrs. Blossom, after several unsuccessful attempts at finding her voice, apparently discovered it in the lower part of her stomach, and exclaimed in a sepulchral tone, which seemed to emanate from that region:

‘It’s all up, Mr. Snork! all up! The police has been down on us, and four of the lambs is took.’

‘Hallo!’ shouted Mr. Snork, in the intensity of his earnestness, turning round, and for the first time facing Mrs. Blossom. ‘How now! — four on ’em took?’

Mrs. Blossom shook her head in a mournful manner as she replied: ‘Four on ’em; among ’em was the infant with sore eyes, what I nussed as if it had been my own child; and little Bill, too; the cream, the very *cream* of my set! *Sich* a set as they was! New-York had n’t its match for trainin’. Little Bill, when he went out this blessed morning, said he knowed something was a-coming over him. It might be a colic, he said, or something else — he did not know what; but he knowed it was something; he had a presentiment of it, a sort of sinking of the stomach; and now, here ’s the end of it.’

‘Little Bill took too!’ said Mr. Snork, with much interest. Who’d have thought it? and *he* such a wide-awake ‘un! But out with it, Mrs. Blossom; let’s hear how it was.’

‘Well,’ said the woman, looking cautiously about the room, rather from a habit of suspicion acquired by living in the constant perpetration of acts which brought her within the reach of the law, than from any apprehension of immediate danger: ‘it was all about the boy and girl you saw at my place,’ said she, nodding to Mr. Snork, by way of calling his attention to that fact. ‘The girl gave me the slip two days ago, and I never heerd on her till this mornin’, when Bill Smith, the beak what I keeps in pay to let me know what’s in the wind, run in to tell me that there was a complaint agin me at the police office, and a warrant gettin’ out arter me, and that I’d better run for it, or I’d be nabbed. Before he got through, I seed ’em a comin; and I sloped out of the back winder, and got off; while he stayed there to lead them off the scent; but they caught three or four of the babies, what happened to drop in just then; and I s’pose they’re booked for the House of Refuge. That there place will be the ruin on us!’

Here the lady paused and shook her head, in a disconsolate manner, but being invited by Mr. Snork to take another ‘pull’ at the bottle, which stood in full view, and having accepted his invitation; and having, by dint of such pulling, contrived to swallow about a gill of its contents; and being thereby not a little refreshed, she said that she ‘felt much better, and was glad to have sich friends as the Snorks. She had always said they were above the ordinary run of friends, and so they were. As for herself, she was bu’st up; out and out a bu’sted woman; but she hoped *they* never would be—so she did. She was in earnest in what she said, although perhaps they might not think it—but she was.’

‘Well, well, go on,’ said Snork, who seemed to take more interest in the detail of her escape than in her praise of himself; ‘well, you cut and run. What then? What came of the boy? the one I saw? Did they claw him too?’

Mrs. Blossom placed her fore-finger on the end of her nose, and pressing that feature very flat to her face, and winking, said, with a low chuckling laugh:

‘*Did* they, though? There’s more in that boy than you think for. I’d sooner lose my whole set than him. It was him that they were arter; but he was off, long ago. My eyes! Did they think when the gal was gone that I’d be fool enough to keep him where they could reach him? Did they think that? Didn’t I know that they’d move heaven and airth to get him? He! he! he! ‘Let ’em look — let ’em look; and let ’em have all they find of him. They’re welcome to it.’

‘So you hid him, then?’ inquired Snork, drawing from his pocket an iron tobacco-box, from which he took a large piece of tobacco, which he deposited in his mouth. After this he shut the box, with a loud click, and restored it to its former place in his pocket.

‘Never you mind what I did with him,’ replied Mrs. Blossom, with a leer at the man; ‘that’s my affair. He’s where *they* wo’n’t find him; nor you, nor any one else.’

‘Oh! ho! you’re coming the mysterious over us, are you? Well, that’s your look-out. You may hide your babies, and be d — d, for all I care,’ replied Mr. Snork carelessly, kicking a small stump of wood in the fire; ‘only I thought that as the game was up with you, and the gal gone, and the beaks arter the boy, you’d like to get rid of him; that’s all. But we want to meddle with no one’s affairs — do we, Mrs. Snork?’

That lady, who had taken no active part in the conver-

sation, but on the contrary, to show either her indifference to her husband, or her visitor, had gone to the window and was looking out, turned short around, and without replying to the question, said :

‘If there’s any lady or gentleman in this ’ere room who expects a visit from the police, they’d better make themselves scarce, ’cause the police is coming; *I* don’t expect nobody. *I* don’t keep such vulgar company.’

Saying this, the lady seated herself complacently on a small stool, and looked with a pleasant smile in the fire. Her composure, however, was shared neither by Mr. Snork nor Mrs. Blossom; and after a hurried consultation of a minute or two, the man opened a small door, communicating with a dark passage in which was a narrow stair-way leading to a back street. Beckoning to Mrs. Blossom to follow, he stood holding the latch of the door, until the noise of the persons ascending the main stair-case warned him that it was time to be off; when, shutting the door, he left the room in the undivided possession of his lady.

Scarcely had they disappeared, when the other door was flung open, and one or two police-officers entered, accompanied by a short, square-built man, with fiery black eyes, who burst into the room, followed at a less rapid pace by an old man who led a little girl by the hand.

‘Is your name Snork?’ demanded the former, impetuously; ‘answer me.’

A woman who could keep such a man as Mr. Snork in subjection, was one not likely to be intimidated by the general run of men; and she accordingly answered, ‘that what her name was, was her own business and none of his.’

‘Damme, you may well be ashamed of it!’ exclaimed the man, fiercely; ‘one whose life is spent in breaking the

hearts of children, and making them food for the prison, the gallows, and the grave, may well shrink ——'

'Come, come, Frank,' interrupted the old man, 'this will never do. You know nothing against this person. I'm sure,' said he, 'you would not willingly be unjust, and you are so now. We came here merely to ask a few questions, which I have no doubt will be answered without hesitation. We are searching for a boy, the brother of this girl,' said he, turning to the woman, who directed her attention to him for the purpose of not observing the operations of the policemen, who, with a spirit of inquiry peculiar to police-officers, were overturning the numerous heaps of rubbish and old clothing which lay scattered about the room, possibly for the purpose of examining their quality. 'If you can give us any information respecting him, you will not only oblige us, but will be rewarded for your trouble.'

Had Mrs. Blossom been more communicative, it is not improbable that the last part of Harson's remark would have placed her secret in imminent danger; but as Mrs. Snork happened to be profoundly ignorant on the subject, she answered, bluntly, that she knew nothing about him.

'Nor of the woman who keeps him?'

'I do n't keep the run of all the women that has boys,' replied Mrs. Snork, sulkily. 'Most of 'em has 'em.'

'Her name's Blossom,' said the old man.

'Well, I suppose that does n't hinder her from having a boy, does it?' replied Mrs. Snork; 'or two, or a dozen. There is no law agin it, is there? I do n't see what I've got to do with this 'ere; or why you come rioting in my premises, arter run-away old women and run-away boys. I do n't keep lodgings for 'em.'

'Come, come, old woman, this ere is all gammon,' said

one of the policemen, who had got through his investigation, and was ready to take part in the dialogue. 'It wo'n't go down with *us*. We know you, and you know us ; so put a stopper on your tongue, and answer our questions ; and civilly too, and straight forrards, or we 'll rake up some old grudges, which you would n't like to have meddled with. So look sharp now. Where 's Mrs. Blossom ?'

'I do n't know,' replied the woman, in a tone not a little subdued by the last hint of the officer.

'Recollect *that*, Bill,' said the man, turning to his associate. 'She do n't know. Put that down. I suppose you never saw her,' said he, again addressing the woman.

'Yes, I did,' said Mrs. Snork, evidently ill at ease, at the progress of the examination ; while Bill, drawing a lead pencil from his pocket, proceeded to wet its point on his tongue, and to write his own name in a small book with great frequency and perseverance, leaving the lady under the impression that her answers were going down in black and white.

'She *did* see her, Bill,' said the man. 'Book that.'

Bill wrote his name again.

'When ?'

'About ten minutes ago. She went out there, said Mrs. Snork, pointing to the door through which Mrs. Blossom had retreated. 'Where she went to, or where the boy is, or who he is, or any thing more about him, I do n't know ; that's flat.'

Saying this, by way of proving that it *was* flat, she slapped her hand on her own knee, and turned her back upon them all.

'Have you booked all that, Bill ?'

Bill nodded.

'If an abundant reward could induce you to give us and more information,' said the old man, hesitating :

'I've told you all I know,' replied the woman, sharply
'If you 'll pay for lies, I'll give you plenty of 'em.'

Harrison cast a puzzled look at the officers.

'I guess she do n't know any thing more,' said the man.
If she does, and has been coming her nonsense over me,
she 'll pay up for it, that's all, and she knows it. Come,
Sir; there's nothing more to be did here.'

Saying this, he turned on his heel, and, followed by the
others, left the room.

CHAPTER IX.

IN the same room which has been already described, in Harry Harson's dwelling, and in one of the stout, plethoric chairs before mentioned as constituting a part of its furniture, and beneath the superintendence of the busy clock, and under the watchful eye of that respectable dog Spite, sat Jacob Rhoneland, with his elbow resting on the table, his cheek leaning on the palm of his hand, and his eyes half shaded by his long blanched locks, listening with deep anxiety to Harson, who occupied a chair opposite, and was speaking with an earnestness which showed that the subject on which he discoursed was one in which he felt no slight interest.

The manner of Rhoneland would have attracted the notice of even a casual observer. He seemed restless and nervous; and at times even frightened. Occasionally he smiled faintly, and shaking his head, half rose from his seat, but sat down, scarcely conscious of what he did; and leaning his forehead on the palm of his hand, seemed to listen with breathless attention, as if dreading to lose a word of Harson's remarks, which were occasionally strengthened by his pressing his hand gently on Rhoneland's, as it rested on the table. At last, Harson, in conclusion, said in an earnest tone: 'Now tell me, Jacob, on your honor, do you love her?'

'Do I love her?' repeated Rhoneland; 'do I love my own child, my own little Kate, who slept in my arms when a child, and who, now that she has become quite a woman, and I am gray, and feeble, and broken down, still clings to me? Others have found me a querulous, troublesome old man,

and have fallen away from me ; but she never did. Do n't ask me if I love her, Harry, don't ask *that* again. Do I think of any one else, or care for any one else ? Dead and frosty as this old heart is, she has the whole of it ; and she deserves it ; God bless her ! God bless her ! It's not a little matter that would make me forget Kate.'

The old man raised his head ; and his eye lighted up with an expression of pride, as he thought of his child. It was transient, and as it passed off he fell into deep thought. What strange fancies peopled those few moments of thought ; for the memory of the old is teeming with phantoms of hopes and dreams, long past ; familiar things, part of themselves, of their very being, but now melted into air, faded and gone, they cannot tell when or whither ; and of faces and forms long since shrouded in the tomb. And in the dim ears of age, in faint whispers, speak voices whose tones are never to be heard again ; awakening old affections, subdued indeed by time, but yet unextinguished, and slumbering in hidden corners of memory, and appealing to the heart of the living, and begging still to be cherished there. Rhoneland sighed as he turned his eyes from the window, and looked down at his withered hands. 'They were not so when Kate was a child. He was far from young, even then, but not so old and shattered as now. Kate's mother was living too ; she was much younger than he was ; and he had hoped that she would have outlived him ; but he had followed her to the grave, and he was left alone with his little girl !' His lip quivered ; for he remembered her watchful kindness ; her patience ; the many marks of affection which had escaped her, showing that he was always uppermost in her thoughts ; and that, amid all other occupations, she never forgot him. They had been trifling indeed ; perhaps unnoticed at the time ; but he had missed them when she was in her grave, and they

came no more. She had begged him to cherish and guard their child when she should be gone, and there would be none to love her but him. Had he done so? 'Ay! with heart and soul; with heart and soul,' muttered he, rising and walking across the room, to conceal the working of his countenance, and the tears which started in his eyes.

'Oh Harry!' said he, turning to Harson, 'if you knew all, you would n't ask if I love Kate. She's every thing to me now. All are gone but her; all — all!'

He returned, and seated himself, with a deep sigh. His lips moved as if he were speaking, though no sound escaped them; but after a moment he said: 'It's all that I can do for one who's dead.'

'I *do* believe that your child is dear to you, Jacob; I never doubted it,' said Harson; 'but there is another question which I must ask. 'Have you observed her of late? Have you noticed her drooping eye, her want of spirits, and failing strength?'

Rhoneland moved restlessly in his chair, and then answered: 'No, no, Harry, you're jesting. Kate's eye is bright, and her cheek full and round; her step elastic and firm. I watch *that*, Harson. Oh! Harry, you do n't dream how anxiously I watch her. Her life is mine; her heart's blood is *my* heart's blood. She's in no danger, no danger, Harry,' said he, taking Harson's hand between his, and looking appealingly in his face. 'Is she in any danger? Do n't deceive me. Is any thing the matter with her?'

'No, not just now,' replied Harson. 'But suppose you should see her becoming thin, and her looks and health failing; and even though she should not die, suppose her young heart were heavy, and her happiness destroyed — and by you?'

The old man looked at Harson with a troubled, wistful

eye, as he said: 'Well, Harry, well; I'm old — very old; do n't trifle with me, I can't bear it. What do you mean? Is Kate ill?'

'No, not exactly *ill*,' replied Harson, much at a loss how to introduce his subject. 'Suppose, in short, that she should fall in love, some day — for young girls *will* do these things — and suppose that the young fellow was a noble, frank-hearted boy, like — like Ned Somers, for instance — would you thwart her? I only say *suppose* it to be Somers.'

'Kate does n't think of these things,' said the old man, in a querulous tone. 'She's a child; a mere child. It will be time enough to talk of them years hence. God help me!' muttered he, pressing his hands together, 'Can it be that *she*, my own little Kate, will desert me? I'll not believe it! She's but a child, Harry; *only* a child.'

'Kate is nearly eighteen, Jacob,' replied Harson, 'and quite a woman for her years. She's beautiful, too. I pretend to no knowledge of women's hearts, nor of the precise age at which they think of other things than their dolls; but were I a young fellow, and were such a girl as Kate Rhoneland in my neighborhood, I should have been over head and ears in love, months ago.'

Jacob Rhoneland folded his hands on the table, and leaned his head upon them, without speaking, until Harson said, after the lapse of some minutes, 'Come, Jacob, what ails you?'

Without making any reply to this question, Rhoneland, looking him full in the face, asked, in a sad tone: 'Do you think, Harry, that Kate, my own child, has turned her back upon me, and given her heart to a stranger? And do you think that she will desert her father in his old age, and leave him to die alone?'

'Come, come, Rhoneland, this is too bad,' said Harson;

'this is mere nonsense. If the girl *should* happen to cast a kind glance at Ned, Ned's a fine fellow; and if Ned should happen to think that Kate had not her equal among all whom he knew, he would be perfectly right. And then if, in the course of time, they should happen to carry matters farther, and get married, I do n't see why you should take it to heart, or should talk of desertion, and dying alone. I'll warrant you Ned is not the man to induce a girl to abandon her friends. No, no; he's too true-hearted for that.'

'Well, well,' said the old man, rising and gazing anxiously about him, 'God grant that it may never happen. It will be a sad day for me when it does. I'd rather be in my grave. I cannot tell you all; but if you knew what *I* do, perhaps you'd think so too. Indeed you would, Harry. There's one who knows more about Somers than either you or I; much that's bad, *very* bad. I can't tell his name.'

'I know it already,' replied Harson: 'Michael Rust.'

'Ha!' ejaculated Rhoneland, in a faint voice, his cheek growing pale; 'You know Michael Rust, do you?'

'I know something of him, and but little in his favor. What he says against Somers is not worth thinking of. Let him clear his own name. Perhaps he may be called on to do it some day, and may find it no easy matter. And now, my old friend,' said he, taking Rhoneland by the hand, 'since we have spoken of this Rust, let me caution you against him. Listen to no tales of his respecting Kate, or Ned, or any one else. Beware of all connection with him. Above all, give him no hold on yourself; for if you *do*, depend on it, you'll rue it. I've made inquiries about him; and you may rest assured that I do not speak unadvisedly.'

Rhoneland had risen to go; but as Harson spoke he sank feebly in his chair, and buried his face in his hands, with his long hair falling over them; but no sound of emotion escaped

him, although Harson could see that he trembled violently, and that there was a great internal struggle going on. At last he said : ' It's very hard, Harry, to feel that you are in the power of a man who would not hesitate to sacrifice even your life to his own ends ; and yet to know that it must be so ; that, hate and loathe him as you may, your fate is linked with his, and that he and you must sink or swim together. But so it is, God help me ! a poor bewildered old man ! Oh ! Harry, could I but die, with none to molest me, or see me, but my own dear child ; with no one to haunt my death-bed and torture me, and threaten me and *her* ; and could I but know that when I am gone she at least will be happy, I'd *do* it, Harry, I'd *do* it ! Life is not to me what it once was. It's dull enough, now.'

' And who is this who has such power over you ?' inquired Harson, placing his hand on his shoulder. ' Come, be frank with me, Jacob ; who is it ? Is it Michael Rust ?'

Rhoneland started up, looked suspiciously about the room, and said in a quick, husky voice : ' Did I say it was Rust ? I'm sure I did *not*, Harry. Oh ! no, not Rust. He's a noble, generous fellow ; so frank, and free, and bold. Oh ! no, *not* Rust ; he's my best friend. I would n't offend Rust, nor thwart him, nor cross his path, nor even look coldly on him. Oh ! no, no, no ! Do n't speak of him. I do n't like to talk of him. Let's speak of something else ; of yourself, or Ned, or Kate — of Kate, my own dear little Kate. She's a noble girl, Harry, is she not ? Ha ! ha ! *that* she is !' and the old man laughed faintly, drew a deep sigh, and turned abruptly away.

' Harry,' said he, after a pause, ' will you make me a promise ?'

' If it is one which a man may honestly keep, I will,' replied Harson.

‘When I am dead, will you be a father to Kate? — love her as I have loved her — no, no, that you cannot — but *love* her you *can*, and will; and above all,’ said he, sinking his voice, ‘let no evil tales respecting her father be whispered in her ear; let her believe that he was all that was virtuous and good. I’ve wronged no man, Harry; and however much appearances may hereafter be against me, this heart and hand are honest; there’s no fraud or deceit in what I ask, and I know you’ll do it; for when I’m in my grave, her heart will be the last hold I shall have on earth. When the dead are swept from memory too, the earth is lost to them indeed. Will you promise, Harry?’

‘I will,’ said Harson; ‘and as my own child will I guard her from all harm.’

‘That’s all; and now, God bless you! I’ve lingered here too long. Don’t forget your promise. I feel happier for it even now.’

Jacob Rhoneland, however, was not doomed to reach his home in the same frame of mind in which he then was; for he had not gone far from Harson’s house, when a voice whose tones sent the blood to his heart, exclaimed: ‘Ha, Jacob! my old friend Jacob! It makes my heart dance to see you walking as briskly as if old age and the cares of life had left no mark upon you. You’re a happy man, Jacob.’

Rhoneland started; for in front of him, bowing, and smirking, and rubbing his hands together, stood Michael Rust, his eyes glowing and glittering, with a glee that was perfectly startling. Rhoneland muttered something of its being a fine day, and of the pleasant weather, which had tempted him abroad, and then stopped abruptly.

‘You acted unwisely, my friend, very unwisely, in being from home at such a moment,’ said Rust, ‘for I just came from there; and such doings, Jacob! such plots! such con-

trivances ! such intrigues, and love-making, and billing, and cooing, and whispering ! and such conspiracies against old dad ! . Not that I believe little Kate had any thing to do with it. Oh, no ! but she's young, and Ned Somers is — no matter what. *I* know what he is ; and others know too. But I never make mischief, nor meddle. *I* say nothing against him. No ! he's a noble fellow — very noble ; so open and candid ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! I hope you won't go to your house some day and find your daughter flown, and with *him* ; and I hope if it is with him it will be to the church ; that's all — that's all. Good-bye, Jacob ; I'm in a vast hurry,' said he, bustling off, as if recollecting some important engagement. 'Dear me ! I've lost a world of time. Good-bye, good-bye. If you should happen to get home soon, you'll surprise them both.'

As he went off, he turned back, and muttered to himself : 'I've sown the seeds of suspicion in his heart against his own child. *Let him hate her, if needs be ; and let him think her the vilest of the vile. It will favor my ends.*'

The old man stood for a long time where Rust had left him, with his hands clasped, looking about him with a bewildered air. He seemed like one stunned by some heavy and overpowering blow. He took one or two steps, tottering as he went, and then leaned feebly against a house. The words 'my child ! my child !' once or twice escaped him, in a low, moaning tone ; he passed his fingers over the buttons of his coat, unconsciously twitching and jerking them ; he looked on the pavement, and seemed endeavoring to regain some train of thought which had passed through his mind ; and then shaking his head, as if disappointed at his want of success, scarcely knowing what he did, he commenced counting the cracks in the bricks. A few small stones were lying on the side-walk, and he idly kicked them off, one by one:

his thoughts wandered from one object to another, until he began to watch the smoke, as it escaped from the chimneys of the houses opposite. Some was dark and brown, and some blue and bright, and circled upward, until it and the sky became one; while the other floated off, a dark, lowering mass, as long as he could see it. People were passing in various directions; and he wondered whither they were going, and how many there were; he commenced counting them; he made a mistake; he had got to twenty, when three or four passed together; so he struck the score from his memory, and commenced afresh. At last a man jostled him, as he stood, and told him to get out of the way, and not to occupy the whole walk. This recalled him to himself; and he resumed his course. As he went on, the recollection of what Rust had told him again crossed his mind; and his feeling of indifference gave place to one of fierce excitement. With his teeth hard set, his long hair streaming in the wind, his step rapid, yet tottering and irregular, and with an expression of intense mental anguish on every line of his face, he bent his steps toward his own house. It was a bright day, and the warm sunshine was sleeping on roof and wall; on cellar and house-top, warming many a sad heart; lighting up many a heavy eye, and calling forth all that is happy and joyous in earth and man. Strange was it! that under such a sky, with such a glad world about him, an old man, hanging over the grave, should dare to utter curses and imprecations against his fellow-man. Yet such was the tenor of his words:

‘Curses on them! curses on them!’ muttered he; ‘the false ones! When I was striving like a very beast of burden, yielding body and soul to torments, for her sake, to play me false! It was bitter, but it was human. Whenever troubles gather about one’s path; when he is blighted and

crushed to the earth ; when his heart is bruised and bleeding, and yearns for the love and sympathy of those about him ; when a mild word, a kind look, are of more worth than gold or jewels, *then* friends drop off. Suffering and trouble scatter them like a pestilence. I was in drivelling dotage, to think that *she* would be aught else than the rest of them. What though I did give her life, and fondle her on my knee in infancy ; and hang over her when she slept ; and pray, come what might to me, that she might be happy ? What though I did cherish and protect her, and love her, when this old heart was warped against all the rest of the world, until every fibre of it was entwined with hers ; until every thought was for her ; and how I should preserve the accumulations of a hard life, so that when the earth covered me she might live luxuriously ? What though I did all this ? I became in her way ; for I had gold, and she wanted it ! That's it ! Oh ! what a fool I was,' continued he, bitterly, 'to imagine that she would prove true, when all others have proved false ; and that gratitude would bind her to me, so that when I should become decrepid, and could not totter about, but must mope out the remnant of my life, like a chained prisoner, that she would be near me, with her bright face and cheerful voice ; and would cheer me up ; and would tell me that I had watched over her childhood ; and that she loved me for it. Happy dreams they were !' said he mournfully ; 'happy dreams ! Ah, Kate ! my own little child ! you should not have forgotten your old father ; indeed you should not. But no, no !' he added, checking himself, 'it could not have been *she* ; I'll not believe it. It was not she — poor child ; she never did harm in her life. She was always good-tempered, and kind, and patient. Oh, no ! she must not leave me — I am too old now to find a new friend. I'll beg her to stay with me until I die. I'll not live long, to-trouble

her ; and perhaps she will bear with me till then ; she must not go ; oh, no ! she *must* not. *Go,*' muttered he, his mood changing, and his eyes beginning to flash ; 'go where ? with Somers ? with Somers ! Can it be that he has been all this while scheming to rob me of her ? Go with Somers ? with Ned Somers ? *He said he hoped it would be to the church.* What *did* he mean ? what could he mean ? But I'll soon know,' said he, hurrying on ; 'I'll soon know !'

Impetuous the old man had always been, though age had in a great measure subdued his spirit ; but now the recollection of Rust's words lashed him into fury ; and when he reached his house, he dashed into it without pausing to reflect what he should say, or how he should act. He flung the door open ; and, as if to justify the very tale of Michael Rust, there stood Kate, with her hand in Ned's, and her head resting against his shoulder.

'Ha ! ha ! taken ! taken !' shouted the old man, with a kind of frenzied glee ; 'taken in the very act ! Plotting treason ! plotting treason ! It was a glorious conspiracy, was it not, Ned Somers ? to steal into a man's house, and, under the garb of friendship, to endeavor to wean away his child, and to carry her off ? Oh ! how some men can fawn ! what open, frank faces they can have ! how they can talk of love, and honor, and generosity ! what friendly smiles they can wear ! And yet, Ned, these very men are lying, and all the while the Devil is throned in their hearts, and sits grinning there !'

Somers stared at him in undisguised astonishment ; for he was fully convinced that the old man had lost his reason ; and under that impression he placed himself between him and Kate, lest in his fury he should injure her.

This movement did not escape Rhoneland. 'Good God !

said he, raising his clasped hands to heaven, 'he already keeps me from my child! Shall this be? Out of my house! out of my house!' shouted he, advancing toward him, and shaking his fist.

'Never,' returned Somers, 'until I am convinced that you will not harm your daughter.'

'*I harm her! I harm her!*' repeated Rhoneland. 'God of heaven! what black-hearted villains there are! The very man who would by false oaths and protestations decoy her from her own hearth, and when she had deserted all for him, would cast her off, a branded thing, without name or fame, he, *he* talks of protecting her from her own father! No, no, Ned Somers,' he said, in a voice of bitter calmness, 'you may go; I'll not harm her.'

His words had given Somers a clue to the cause of his conduct; and pale as death, but with a calm face, he said, 'Will you hear me, Mr Rhoneland?'

'Hear you! Have I not heard you and believed you? Ay, I *have*. I was in my dotage; and you too, Kate, you listened and believed, did you not? Ah! girl, girl! a serpent charmed in Eden! But it's past now. I'll love you, Kate, though he do not. They said that gold was my God. They said that for gold I would barter every thing; but they did n't know me. *He* told you so too, Kate, did he not?—he told you that I'd sell you for *that*. He whispered tales of your father in your ear, until you became a renegade at heart; and *you*, my own child, plotted with a stranger to desert your home. *He* told you that he loved you; and would make you his wife; did he not? Poor child! poor child? God help her! she knows no better! Ned Somers,' said he, turning to the young man, 'you must leave this house, and come here no more. My daughter is

all that I have to bind me to life, and I cannot spare her. You must go elsewhere to spread your web. For your vile designs upon her, may God forgive you — I never will!’

‘Jacob Rhoneland,’ said Somers, ‘I have borne more from you than I would have taken from any other man. You are not now in a state to listen to reason, nor perhaps am I able just now to offer it; but you have said *that* of me which I should be false to myself not to answer; and which I declare to be utterly untrue. I *do* love your daughter; and love her well and honestly; and I would like to see the man, excepting yourself, who dare say otherwise. Some one has been lying to you; and can I but find him out, he shall pay for it. *You*, Kate, don’t believe it?’ said he, turning to the girl, who stood by, with blanched cheek, and the tears in her eyes.

‘No, no, Ned; I do not; nor will father, when he’s calm,’ said she, taking the old man’s hand. ‘Some person has been slandering you to him; but he’ll get over it soon.’

Rhoneland drew his hand hastily from her, and turning to Ned, said: ‘Leave the house! I have already told you to do so. Will you wait till you are thrust from it? Begone, I say!’

‘Go, go, Ned, for *my* sake!’ exclaimed Kate, pushing him toward the door. ‘He’ll never be right while you are here. Go, *dear* Ned, go.’

‘I can’t go before I’ve told your father how matters stand.’

‘No matter for that now,’ said Kate earnestly; ‘I’ll make all right; go, go!’

Half pushing, half persuading him, she finally induced him to leave the house.

‘Friend Ned seems in a hurry,’ said a voice in his ear, when he had gone but a hundred yards. ‘Has sweet little

Kate been unkind? Has she told you that she loved Michael Rust? Ha! ha! Or has old Dad been crabbed? Ha! ha! A queer old boy that dad of hers, Ned; a queer old fellow; full of freaks! Do you know he hinted to me that he thought you had an eye on Kate, and wanted to run off with her? Was n't that a good one, Ned? Ha! ha! It makes me laugh to think of it. He did n't know that Michael Rust was the fellow; that *he* was the one to guard against.'

'I believe you,' said Ned, bitterly; 'I believe that Michael Rust is the one to guard against; and Jacob Rhoneland will find it out some day.'

'To be sure he will, to be sure he will!' said Rust. 'Yet the old fellow was afraid of you; *you*, Ned, *you*! He even hinted that your purposes were not *honest*. Some kind friend has been at work and filled his head with queer tales about you. And all the time he did n't dream of me; and did n't know that it was *me* that Kate was dying for. He'll find me his son-in-law yet, some day. I wish you would keep away from his house, Ned. To tell the truth, I'm jealous of you. For in confidence, Ned, I *do* believe that Kate is a little of a coquette at heart; and I have often said to myself: Although I see nothing particularly kind in her manner to Somers, who knows what it may be when they're alone? I'm sure there's nothing in her actions, when others are present, to betray how kind and coaxing she is to me when we are alone. Ah! Ned; ~~she~~ ^{she} is all tenderness in our moments of privacy. The last time I saw her she said that she respected you, but swore she did not care the snap of a finger for you. God bless her for that! how happy it made me! how charming she looked! Ah! she's an angel! upon my soul I must go back and kiss her!'

Somers, chafing with fury at being thus beset, had walked on with a rapid step, while Rust kept pace with him, hissing his words in his ear; but as he uttered the last sentence, Rust turned away. As he did so, Somers caught him by the collar, and drawing him close to him, said :

‘Michael Rust, I know that every word you have just uttered is false, and a vile slander against as noble a girl as ever lived. I will not punish you as you deserve, because I promised Kate Rhoneland that I would not; but before you go let me tell you this: A greater liar and villain than yourself never walked. Things are oozing out about you, which will make this city ring with your infamy. Tongues which have been tied by gold have found fear more powerful, and have spoken; and there are those tracking out Michael Rust’s course for the last few years, who will not let him rest till they have run him down. You’re fond of figures of speech; there’s one. Now go and kiss Kate Rhoneland with what satisfaction you may!’

He flung him from him; and, without looking at him turned off into a bye-street.

CHAPTER X.

THE few words uttered by Somers, as he flung his tormentor from him, threw Michael Rust into a fit of profound thought. Pondering over his schemes, and wondering which particular one was about to fail; and yet so confident in his own sagacity and clear-sightedness, that he felt disposed to think failure impossible; he took his way to his own house. There, assuming the same costume which he usually wore when in his office, he locked the door of his room, put the key in his pocket, and sallied into the street.

‘If what he said be true,’ muttered he, ‘there must be a traitor. Him I can put my finger on; and first of all *him* will I punish; and now for a trial of that new animal, Kornicker. Bah!’

Had Mr. Kornicker overheard this allusion to himself, it is scarcely probable that his gratification would have been extreme; for admitting himself and all the rest of the human race, zoologically speaking, to be animals; even then, there was much in the tone of Michael Rust to indicate that Mr. Kornicker belonged to a genus distinct from and inferior to the human species in general; and this was a position against which there is little doubt that Mr. Kornicker would have contended manfully. Without pausing to reflect upon the justice or injustice of his observation, and in truth forgetting that he had made it, Rust took the shortest route to his office, whither, to explain what will follow, it may not be amiss to precede him.

From the day on which he had taken Kornicker into his service, he had not been at his office, nor had he met his

new clerk, or seen him, or heard from him. In truth, many other matters pressing upon him, prevented his calling there; and although he did not forget that Kornicker was almost a stranger to him, for he forgot nothing, yet knowing that he could do no harm where he was, and that there was little to embezzle or steal, except the door-key, he in a great measure dismissed him from his thoughts, until he required his services. Although this matter dwelt thus lightly on the mind of Rust, it was the source of much profound thought and intense abstraction to Kornicker. He had endeavored to learn something respecting Rust; and even formed an intimacy with the 'desperadoes,' for the purpose; and what little he learned there certainly did not make him more at ease; for even the most desperate of *them* shook his head, and gave him a friendly caution 'to look sharp;' at the same time adding, that though Rust was a little man, 'he was a bitter root.' It was observed, however, that by degrees Mr. Kornicker's abstraction grew less and less, and his spirits rose. At times, unnatural sounds and loud laughter, and even songs, were heard to emanate from Rust's hitherto silent room; and in the dusk of the evening, dim figures were seen skulking to and from it; and in the day-time, shabby-gentle men loitered carelessly through the entry, and after listening at the key-hole, gave a shrill whistle, which being answered from within, they dove into the room, and disappeared. At times, too, the clinking of knives and forks against crockery was heard from within; and on such occasions, the phantom of the small boy with a white cap on his head was seen to flit up and down the stairs with a dish in his hand, or a bottle under his arm, always vanishing at Rust's office, or disappearing in the bowels of the refectory below.

But notwithstanding all these symptoms of returning vivacity, Mr. Kornicker's mind was far from tranquil on the subject of the mystery of his present situation.

'Fallen into the toils of a little old man,' said he to himself, as he sat, on the morning on which we open this chapter, in front of the fire, with his legs stretched at full length in front of him; the toe of one foot supporting the heel of the other; 'of a little old man, with a red handkerchief tied round his head, a broad-brimmed hat on the top of that, and a camlet cloak over his shoulders. It's too deep for me. I can't fathom it. The victim of a hideous compact, whereby I am decoyed into his service, to sit in a room eight feet by twelve, on a yellow wooden chair with four legs, and a back made of the most uneasy kind of timber, probably *lignum-vitæ*, and yet with no cushion; to wait for people who never come, to eat without drinking, and to submit to divers other small inconveniences; such as bringing up coal in a pail without a handle; kindling my own fire with damp wood, and snuffing sixpenny dips with a pair of tongs, one of whose feet is absent. There's something very mysterious about it — very. All I hope is, that this Mr. Rust is not the 'Old Boy.' That's all. I don't wish to speak disrespectfully of him: but I *do* sincerely hope, for his own sake, that he isn't the 'Old Boy.' It would be bad for him if he were. As for myself,' said he, drawing out his snuff-box, and snuffing with great absence of mind, 'it makes no difference: I'm used to it. I've been brought up under trying circumstances. I slept in a grocery sand-bin on the north corner of a street for a week. Not such a bad place neither in warm weather; but I was ousted by a tipsy gentleman, whom I found there one night. The tipsy gentleman was sick, too; and when tipsy gentlemen get sick, most people know what follows.

The place was untenantable afterward. But *that* was nothing to *this*; positively nothing. I knew what I was about then; *now* I do n't. I never met but one case in point with mine. It was that of the fellow in the Arabian Nights, who fell into the clutches of forty unknown women, and remained with them, feasted with them, and all that — they paying the shot, as in my case — until one morning they all came weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth, to tell him that they were off in the first boat; and that he must stay there till they came back, and might do whatever he liked, and go wherever he chose, except into the stable. There's no stable here, but I am restricted in liquors; *that* carries out the parallel. The housekeeper handed him the keys, and he went jingling about, for forty days, with the keys hanging at his button-hole; his hands in his breeches pockets, whistling and yawning; locking and unlocking doors, and smelling flowers; eating apples and pea-nuts, I suppose, although they were not specially mentioned, and poking his nose into all the odd corners. There the parallel fits again; only it's soon got through with here, seeing that there's only under the table and up the chimney to look, and I've done both. No matter; that chap wound up by having an eye knocked out; and I hope the joke won't be carried so far with me.'

Mr. Kornicker cut short his reflections and remarks; and sitting upright, pulled up his vest, and felt in the neighborhood of his watch-pocket. Suddenly recollecting, however, that he had left the article which belonged there in the safe keeping of a friend, who, with a kindness worthy of all praise, not only took charge of it for him, but actually paid for the privilege of doing so; he pulled down his vest and said, 'he supposed that it was all right, and that *they* would be here presently.' If his last remark applied to guests

whom he expected, he was apparently correct in his surmise; for he had scarcely uttered it, when there was a single sharp knock at the door.

‘Who’s there?’ demanded he, without starting.

‘Open the door!’ replied a voice from without.

‘It is n’t locked,’ said Kornicker; and it might have been observed that there was a remarkable abatement of firmness in the tone of his reply.

In pursuance of this hint, the door opened, and in walked Michael Rust!

Mr. Kornicker, in the course of his checkered existence, had frequently found himself in positions in which he was taken dreadfully aback; but it is doubtful whether he had ever detected himself in a situation which threw him into a state of such utter and helpless consternation as his present one; for, relying on the continued absence of his employer, he had that day invited four particular friends ‘to drop into the office,’ as he had carelessly observed, ‘to take pot-luck with him — a trifle or so; any thing that should turn up.’ This was the very hour: and here was Rust.

He made an unsuccessful effort to welcome his visitor. He got up, muttered something about ‘unexpected pleasure,’ looked vacantly round the room; rubbed his hands one over the other; made an attempt to smile, which terminated in a convulsive twitching of his lips; and finally sat down, with his intellect completely bewildered, and without having succeeded in any thing, except exciting the surprise and suspicion of Rust.

‘There’ll be hell to pay!’ said Kornicker, communing with his own thoughts, ‘there positively *will*; I know it. *There* comes one of them,’ thought he, as a step deliberately ascended the stair; but it passed to the flight above. There was some relief in that; but it was only a respite,

Come they must! He wrung his hands, snuffed spasmodically, returned the box to his pocket, and took it out again instantly. 'What shall I do? what *shall* I do? what the DEVIL shall I do?' exclaimed he mentally.

Rust had spoken to him three times, but he had not heard a word. 'This is all very strange,' muttered Rust, looking about the room as if to seek some explanation. The first thing which attracted his attention was the fact that the two chairs which he had left in the office had, by some odd process of multiplication, increased to six.

'There are six chairs here,' said he, addressing his clerk, in a stern tone; 'where did they come from? Whom are they for?'

Mr. Kornicker looked round, and smiled helplessly. 'Six? Oh, ay; one, two, three, four, five — six. So there *are* six,' said he.

'Well?'

'Well; oh, *well*? Oh, yes, quite well, I thank you; very well,' said Mr. Kornicker, whose ideas were rapidly becoming of a very composite order, and who caught only the monosyllable, without exactly taking in its meaning.

'I'm afraid that Mr. Kornicker is lonely in the absence of his friend Michael Rust,' said Rust, with his usual sneer; 'that he finds this dull, dingy room too dreary for him; and has invited six chairs to keep him company, and cheer up his spirits.'

Kornicker made no reply; he could not, for another step was ascending the stairs. This time it paused at the door, as if the visitor were adjusting his collar, and pulling down his wristbands; after which, a thinnish gentleman, dressed in a green coat, with wide skirts, white at the elbows, and polished at the collar, and pantaloons tightly strapped down.

gray and glistening at the knees, and not a little torn at the pockets, sauntered carelessly in.

'Servant, Sir; servant, Sir;' said he, nodding to Rust with a familiar air, and swinging in his hand a particularly dingy handkerchief. 'This, I suppose, is one of us. He's an old chip; but he may be come of a prime block.' The latter part of this remark was addressed to Kornicker; and terminated with a request that he would 'do the genteel, and present him to his friend.' Kornicker, however, sat stock-still, looking in the grate, and evincing no signs of life, except by breathing rather hard.

'Ha! ha! Ned's gone again — brown study!' said the gentleman, winking at Rust, touching his own forehead, and at the same time extending his hand. 'It's his way. I suppose you're one of our social little dinner-party to-day?'

'Yes, oh, yes!' said Rust, quietly; for these words, and the six chairs, afforded an immediate solution of his difficulties. 'I dropped in; and being intimate with Ned, thought I'd stop.'

'So I supposed,' said the other. 'As Ned *won't*, I *will*. My name's Sludge, Mr. Thomas Sludge,' said he, extending his hand to Rust. 'Happy to make your acquaintance. Your name is — eh? eh?'

'Quite a common one; Smith; Mr. Smith,' replied Rust.

'Ha! ha! you're joking; but no — you *do n't* belong to that numerous family, though, do you? Eh? well; I thought from the cut of your eye that you were an old quiz, and supposed, of course, you were joking.'

At the announcement of the name, Kornicker looked up with a vague hope that *he* might have been mistaken; and that it was not Michael Rust who had thus interrupted his plans; but *there* he stood. 'He's a dreadful reality!' thought he, shaking his head. 'He's no Smith. He's

Michael Rust. God knows who he'll be next, and what he'll do, for I do n't. If they come, I pity them. That's all I can do for them; they must trust to their own resources, and the care of an overruling Providence. I suppose they'll survive it. If they don't, Rust will have to bury them.'

He was too much overwhelmed by what had already occurred, and by his anticipations of what was to come, to attempt to extricate himself from his difficulties. They had fallen upon him with a weight which was insupportable; and now, a ton or two more would make but little difference. They might mash him flat, if they chose; he should not resist them.

In the mean time, Rust and Sludge conversed on all topics, cracked their jokes, and were exceedingly merry on the subject of Kornicker and his employer, and of the tricks which were played upon that respectable personage.

'Ha! ha!' said Mr. Sludge, 'would n't he kick up a rumpus if he knew what was going on here?' The very idea of Rust arriving at this stage of knowledge seemed so absurd, that they laughed until the room rang.

It was not long before their number was increased by the addition of a short, square-built gentleman, with round cheeks and green spectacles, who was introduced by Mr. Sludge as 'Mr. Steekup, one of us.' He was followed by a thin fellow, in shabby attire, and with a very red nose. This latter person was supported by a friend with very large whiskers, and a shaggy great-coat with huge pockets. The first of these two was presented as Mr. Gunter, and the last as Mr. Buzby. Each of these gentlemen, as they respectively entered, walked up to Kornicker, and slapped him on the shoulder, at the same time saluting him with the appellation of 'my tulip,' or 'my old buck,' or 'my sodger,'

or some other epithet of an equally friendly character ; to all of which they received not a word in reply. But though Kornicker's bodily functions were suspended, his thoughts were wonderfully busy.

He felt that he was done for ; completely, irremediably done for. He had an earnest wish, coupled with a hope, a very faint hope — a hope so vague and indefinable that it seemed but the phantom of one — that his guests would be suddenly seized with convulsions of an aggravated character, and die on the spot, or jump out of the window, or bolt up the chimney, or cut each other's throats, or melt into air. He did not care what, or which, or how, or when, or where. All his thoughts and wishes tended to one particular end ; that was, their abrupt departure, in some sudden and decisive manner. But they evinced no disposition to avail themselves of either means of getting out of his way, of which he left them so liberal a choice. And to increase his misery, amidst them all sat Rust, with his head bound in his red silk handkerchief, bowing and smirking, and passing himself off as one of themselves ; drawing out their secrets, and quizzing old Rust, and occasionally casting on his clerk an eye that seemed red-hot ; cracking double-sided jokes, which made *them* laugh, and took the skin off *him* ; and calling him 'Ned,' and asking why he was dull, and why he didn't make himself at home as *he* did ; and whether he didn't think that old Rust would make a 'flare up,' if he should happen to drop in ; and why he didn't ask old Rust to his dinners sometimes ; and all in so pleasant a tone, that the guests swore he was a diamond of the first water, and Mr. Sludge hugged him on the spot.

Mr. Kornicker wondered if he were not dreaming ; and whether Rust was in reality there, and whether he himself was not sitting in front of the fire, sound asleep. It would

be pleasant to wake up and find it so ; but no, it could not be ; people in dreams did n't laugh like these fellows. How *could* they laugh as they did, when *he* was in such a state ! How little they understood the game that was going on ! How they 'd alter their tone, if they did ! It was ridiculous ; it was exceedingly ridiculous. He ought to laugh ; he felt that he ought ; but he would n't yet ; the dinner was to come, and perhaps he might *then* ; he did n't know ; he could n't say ; he'd see about it. Hark ! There was a thump against the wall below, and a jingling of spoons, and knives and forks, against crockery. Now for it ! Another thump ; another, accompanied by another jingle. He wondered whether the boy had spilt the gravy. He hoped he had n't ; but supposed he had. It made no difference. He wondered whether he 'd brought the brandy ; supposed he had ; of *course* he had. It only wanted *that* to damn him ! and of course he would be d — d. He always had been, and always would be ; it was his luck. The person who was bringing the dinner stumbled again ; but he did n't fall. 'No such good luck ! If he had fallen, if he *had* only fallen, and broken his neck, or smashed the dinner, or done any thing to prevent his reaching that door ; but no ; he was too sure-footed for that ; any *other* boy would have done so ; but *he* did n't. He reached the door, and saluted it with a hearty kick ; at the same time informing the company that if they were hungry, they'd better open it, as his hands were full. Kornicker thought that *his* hands were full too ; and even had a faint idea of laughing at this play upon words ; but the inclination passed off without his doing so. Michael Rust opened the door, and the boy came in. Kornicker knew it. He neither looked round nor moved ; in fact, he closed his eyes ; yet he *knew* it — he *felt* it. He had an innate perception that the boy was there, within

three feet of him, bearing in his hands a large tray, with dishes, and a brandy-bottle on it. And now the clattering commenced ; and he was conscious that the boy was setting the table. What *would* be the end of all this ; what *could* be ? After all, perhaps Michael Rust might be a jolly fellow, and he had n't found it out ; and perhaps he wanted to make him at home, and keep up the joke, to save his feelings. He would be glad to think so ; but he did n't ; no, no, he was certain that there was some devil's play going on.

The only person who seemed fully to appreciate his situation was the boy from the refectory, who, with the instinct peculiar to boys of that class, had detected it on the spot ; and abruptly placing a dish on the table, retired to a corner, with his face to the wall, where he laughed violently in private. A warning look from Rust put a stop to his mirth ; nor did he again indulge in it until, the table being set, and being informed that the guests were not proud, and could wait on themselves, he retreated to the entry, where he became exceedingly hilarious.

'Come, Ned, my boy, be seated,' said Rust, going up to Kornicker, and slapping him on the shoulder. 'Wake up ; you know we must be merry sometimes ; and when could there be a better opportunity than when that old fool Rust is away ? He 'll never find it out. Oh, no ; come, come.'

Kornicker made a faint effort to decline ; but a look from Rust decided him, and he rose, went to the table, and mechanically seated himself in the lap of Mr. Sludge, who reminded him that he was not a chair, but that there was an article of that description vacant at his side. Kornicker smiled feebly, bowed abstractedly, and took a seat. He could not eat. He attempted to sip a little brandy, but choked in swallowing it. The dinner, however, went on merrily. The knives and forks clattered against the plates ;

the roast beef grew smaller and smaller; the vegetables skipped down the throats of the guests as if by magic; and the bottle knew no rest. In fact, the only article on the table which stood its ground, was a sturdy old Dutchman in a cocked-hat, who had been metamorphosed into a stone pitcher; and sat there, with his stomach filled with cold water, and his hands clasped over it. Lord! how merry they were! And as the dinner went on, and the bottle grew low, and another was called for by Rust, how uproarious they became! How they sang, and howled, and hooted! What a din they created in the building! By degrees the entry became filled with the 'desperadoes' from the upper stories, who, attracted by doings kindred to their own, accumulated there in a mass, and enlivened the performances by howling through the key-hole, and echoing all the other cries from the bottom of their lungs. But loudest and merriest, and, as it appeared to Kornicker, most diabolical of all, was Michael Rust; helping every one; passing the bottle, and laughing, and yet constantly at work, endeavoring to worm out of his companions something against Kornicker which might render him amenable to the law, and which he might hold over his head; a rod to bend him to his purposes, should he ever prove refractory.

As the dinner advanced and the bottle declined, the guests grew humorous. Mr. Buzby in particular, who after several unsuccessful efforts succeeded in describing the painful situation of a pig, in whose ear a dog was whispering some confidential communication. He also attempted to imitate the remonstrating scream of the animal; but failed, owing to his utterance having become somewhat thick. Mr. Gunter then rose to offer thanks to Mr. Kornicker; but sat down on discovering that Mr. Buzby was terminating his communication by an address of a similar character; and that Mr.

Steekup was engaged in restraining Mr. Sludge, who was bent on performing a hornpipe on the table, which he guaranteed to do without breaking a plate or discomposing a glass; but which Mr. Steekup resisted, being of opinion that his guaranty was but doubtful security. Mr. Sludge, however, was not to be thwarted. He grew animated; Rust encouraged him; he discussed the matter vehemently; he addressed every body, on all subjects; he struggled; he fought, and was finally removed from the room, and cast into the arms of the desperadoes in the entry, to whom he protested manfully against this treatment; and one of the skirts of his coat, which had been torn off in the debate, was ejected after him. This occurrence, together with the fact that a third bottle had become empty; and that no more was called for by Rust; and that it was growing dark, which was the hour for deeds of chivalry among choice spirits like themselves, seemed to be the signal for a general break-up. After shaking hands affectionately with Rust, and slapping Kornicker kindly but violently on the back, and saying that they were sorry to see him so 'd——d glum,' they all spoke on promiscuous subjects at once, and departed in a body, each trying in a very earnest manner to impress upon the rest something which he forgot before he uttered it, but which he supposed he would remember presently.

Rust waited until the silence showed that the guests and the 'desperadoes' had departed together; and then turning to Kornicker, and rubbing his hands together, said:

'A very pleasant little party we've had, Mr. Kornicker; a *very* pleasant little party. Michael Rust is much obliged to you for dispelling the gloom of his office, and making it the gathering-place of such select society. He can't express his thanks in terms sufficiently strong. He feels grateful, too, for your strict adherence to the terms of the agreement be-

tween us. Twenty dollars a month, meals for one, liquor for none. Those were the terms, I think; but Michael Rust is growing old, and his memory may have failed him. Perhaps, too, brandy is n't a liquor; he is n't certain; it used to be, when he was a boy; and he does n't think that it has changed its character; but it may have done so, and he may have forgotten it; for you know he's old and childish, and even in his dotage.'

Mr. Kornicker shook his head. 'I knew it must come!' thought he. He muttered something about his 'standing the shot for the brandy himself.' He made a futile effort to get at his snuff-box, but failed; said something about 'apology to offer,' and was silent.

'Well, Sir,' said Rust, after a pause, altering his manner, 'I have found *you* out. You have n't yet discovered what *I* am. Get these things removed; for I have that on hand which must be attended to. I'll overlook *this*, but it must never be repeated.'

Kornicker, glad to escape thus easily, and yielding, partly to that ascendancy which Rust invariably acquired over those whom he made use of, and partly cowed by the consciousness of guilt, and the fear of losing a comfortable situation, slunk out of the room in search of the boy from the refectory.

CHAPTER XI.

PACING up and down the small room, and muttering to himself in broken sentences, with his brows knit ; at one time hugging his arms tight to his breast, at another flinging them over his head, snapping his fingers, or rubbing his hands together, and chuckling to himself, in that low, mocking tone which was peculiar to him, Rust spent the short interval that elapsed between the departure and return of Kornicker.

When he came to the office on that afternoon, and discovered the character of the persons who during his absence had made it their haunt, his first impulse had been to rid himself of them in the most summary manner ; nor would he have hesitated to have done so, but for the fear that Kornicker might regard such a proceeding as tantamount to taking the same step toward himself, and might break with him immediately, when he could but ill spare him. Determining, however, to reap some advantage from his situation, he set to work during the dinner to effect two objects ; in the first of which, being to quell the spirits of his clerk, he was completely successful ; but in the second, which was to discover something against Kornicker by which he might hold not only that gentleman's actions but his conscience in check, and finally break him down, until he became a mere machine, to obey blindly whatever was dictated to him, he failed utterly. Nothing was discovered on which he could hang a menace ; no burglary, no swindling, no embezzlement, no fraud ; not even a petty contemptible theft ; nothing that

could subject him to fine or imprisonment, even for a single day; for Kornicker, though a vagabond of the first water, still stood out stoutly for principles; of which he had established a code to suit himself, somewhat peculiar in character, but which carried him along more safely, and with less to answer for, here and hereafter, than many who boast a nicer creed, and to whom God had granted greater gifts and more extended opportunities. Rust had mistaken his man. Kornicker never deserted a friend in trouble; his hand was never shut against the solicitations of want, even though that hand might contain but a shilling; and often and often, the whine of a beggar had drawn his last copper from him, when he knew not whither to turn for another. Rust, however, was not daunted; for he believed no man so immaculate but at some time or other he had brought himself within reach of the iron arm of the law. 'Patience, patience!' thought he; 'time will bring that too, and then he will be mine; all mine!'

His reverie and these thoughts, which formed a very essential part of it, were cut short by the arrival of the subject of them, followed by the small boy who had officiated as waiter, bearing a large basket; and who, according to the established usage of all waiters, on entering a room which they intend to quit at any period on the same day, left the door open to facilitate such proceeding.

'Shut the door!' said Rust, sharply.

The boy obeyed the order instantly; and as was intended, the stern, abrupt tone in which it was spoken had a very decided effect upon Kornicker, who slunk into a seat near the window, and began to look abstractedly at the ceiling.

'It's growing dark,' said Rust, turning to him. 'Will you oblige me by lighting a candle?'

There was a show of civility in the wording of this re-

quest; but the tone and manner were as peremptory as in his abrupt order to the boy; and it was obeyed with such nervous alacrity that Kornicker succeeded not only in fulfilling it, but in burning his own finger; whereupon he placed the candle on the mantel-piece, and blew upon the afflicted member with great earnestness.

'Ah!' said Rust, his thin lip curling, 'it's a pity; especially as it's entirely gratuitous; I asked you to light the candle, not your finger.'

Kornicker stopped abruptly, and probably somewhat stimulated by the pain, advanced a step toward him; and looking him steadily in the face, said: 'Thunder! man; let me tell you ——'

'Certainly,' interrupted Rust, bowing with his hand on his heart, and his eyes closed, with an expression of profound humility, 'tell me whatever you please; I shall be delighted to obtain information of any kind. Michael Rust is always in search of knowledge. *Pray* go on with your communication. From its opening I should think it was on the subject of atmospheric electricity; though perhaps it may treat of burns, or candles, or even of dinner-parties for four; or of the various modes of keeping promises; or perhaps you intend to show some new process by which a dinner contract for one may be made to include five. The world's improving; perhaps mathematical calculations are advancing also, and I may be behind the age. But no matter; whatever it is, emanating from such a source as Mr. Kornicker, Mr. Edward Kornicker, it must be valuable. Go on, *do* go on. Bless me! how slow you are!'

Kornicker, completely staggered by the list of topics which Rust enumerated, each of which was foreign to what he had to say, and each of which suggested something disagreeable, stared at him for a moment or two in sore per-

plexity; and then, instead of continuing his remarks, merely shook his head, muttered something between his teeth about 'a hard horse to ride,' and finding that blowing had not assuaged the pain of his finger, had recourse to another usual remedy; and putting it in his mouth, sucked it, apparently with much satisfaction.

'You do not proceed,' said Rust, after waiting with an air of profound attention; 'I'm sorry, *very* sorry; for I've no doubt that I've lost much. You shouldn't have been diffident; you had quite a small audience; only two; one of them a boy, and the other an old fool, you know; and we would have made all allowance for youthful embarrassment.'

Kornicker, however, had so completely altered his mind that he made no other response than that of drawing his finger from his mouth, with a sudden noise like the popping of a cork out of a bottle; and holding it to the light, examined it with an air of anxious and sympathizing investigation. Having concluded his examination, he took a seat at the window, and looked out in the darkness. Rust in the mean time continued his remarks in the same strain; but as he went on, Mr. Kornicker began to show signs of restiveness; shaking his head in a sudden and positive manner, as if giving a sharp negative to some imaginary request; drawing in his breath between his teeth, with a whistling sound, and snuffing with extraordinary frequency and vehemence.

'A pleasant prospect that! The view from the window is very picturesque, particularly by candle-light,' said Rust, whose eye had not been off his clerk for a moment. 'I think it embraces a broken window and an old hat; although you may not be able to see them in this light, as they are at least ten feet off. I hope you enjoy it.'

'Suppose I do?' said Kornicker, turning short round, placing a fist on each knee, and looking up at Rust with an

eye brimming with dogged sulkiness ; ‘and suppose I do n’t ; what then ? what concern is that of yours ? I came here to do your work ; not to give an account of my thoughts or tastes.’

‘Right ! *very* right !’ replied Rust, who saw that he had pushed matters as far as was prudent ; and that any farther direct attempt at annoyance might result in open rebellion upon the part of his clerk ; but at the same time it was no part of his policy to appear to yield to this angry expostulation ; so he merely repeated what he had just said : ‘Very, *very* right, Mr. Kornicker ; provided you *do* my work, I care not a straw for your thoughts and tastes ; and I *have* work for you, of which I will speak to you presently.’

Turning to the boy, who was removing the things from the table and placing them in a large basket, he asked : ‘Who were the persons who dined here to-day ?’

The boy, who at that moment was invisible with the exception of the rear of his legs, and of that portion of his body to which they were immediately attached — the rest of his person being busy at the bottom of the basket, in a struggle with the remnants of the roast beef — rose slowly to an upright attitude, and turning round, somewhat red in the face, asked if Rust were speaking to him ; and on being answered in the affirmative, and the question being repeated, he nodded, and said : ‘He rather thought he ought to be, and should n’t be surprised to find out that he was, if waitin’ on ’em, not once, nor twice, nor three times, nor four times, was one of the avenues to their acquaintance.’

‘Then you *do* know them ?’ said Rust, to whom this reply was rather enigmatical.

‘In course I do ; all to pieces !’ replied the boy.

This whole sentence, from the look and gesture which accompanied it, Rust took to be a strong affirmative.

‘Who are they?’

‘Ax *him*,’ replied the boy, indicating Kornicker by a nod of his head. ‘But do n’t *you* know? My eyes! I thought you know’d ’m all. If I did n’t, I’m bu’st!’

Having given utterance to this elegant expression, he forthwith plunged into the basket, and, with the exception of his aforesaid legs, was seen no more, until Rust told him ‘to be quick,’ when he again emerged, with a piece of meat in his mouth; and shouldering the basket, staggered out of the room, telling Rust ‘that if he did n’t shut the door himself this time, he suspected it would be left open; as he had but one pair of hands, and that pair was full.’

While these words were passing between Rust and the boy, Kornicker sat in the window in silence; but ever and anon, turning about and fastening his eye on the feet of his employer, he slowly perused him from his toes to the crown of his head; and then revised him downward to his feet, with an unflinching stare, generally pausing at the eyes, with an expression by no means amiable; and concluding his examination by a shake of the head, accompanied by that same drawing in of the breath already described.

In truth, Kornicker was gradually beginning to entertain the idea of throwing himself bodily upon Rust; of pummelling and mauling him until he was a jelly; of flinging him promiscuously under the table, to keep company with the blacking-brushes and a ragged coverlet which lay there; then of rushing into the street, cutting his employer, throwing himself into the arms of his absent friends, and of setting up for himself from that time forth. As these dim resolutions acquired strength, he began to straighten himself, to look Rust full in the face, to finger his snuff-box with vast nonchalance, to indulge a low whistle, and once or twice he

even worked his arms and shoulders backward and forward, developing his strength for some unusual performance.

These and various other indications of a resuscitation of spirits did not escape the quick eye of Rust, who saw that he could venture no farther; and after standing for some time with his arms folded, and his eyes fastened on the floor, he turned to Kornicker and said, in a tone very different from any which he had hitherto assumed :

‘I have appeared to you to act strangely to-night, eh?’

‘D — d if you have n’t!’ replied that gentleman, laconically.

‘I supposed so,’ said Rust; ‘but I came here harassed, perhaps cornered; as a wild beast would seek his den, for quiet and repose; and to endeavor to extricate myself from troubles which are thick upon me; and I found it the resort of — what?’

He paused and looked at Kornicker, who, not knowing exactly under what head to class the individuals who had passed the afternoon there, remained perfectly silent.

‘It was not right,’ said Rust. ‘It was not right; but no matter for that now. I have work on hand which must be attended to at once. Bring your chair to the table.’

Kornicker, in compliance with this request, and not a little mollified by Rust’s change of manner, dragged his chair to the place designated, swung it to its feet, sat himself down on it, and leaning his elbow on the table and his cheek on his hand, waited for the other to open his communication.

Taking a large pocket-book from his pocket, Rust ran his eye over a number of papers which were folded up in it, and finally selected two, which he placed on the table in front of him.

‘There they are, at last. Those are the ones,’ said he, pushing them toward Kornicker.

The clerk took them up one after the other, holding an end in each hand, and carefully viewed them from side to side; after which he replaced them on the table, and observed, partly by way of remark and partly in soliloquy: 'Two promissory notes; Enoch Grosket, maker; in favor of Ezra Ikes, for fifteen hundred dollars each; due six months ago.'

'And endorsed by Ikes to Michael Rust,' continued Rust, taking up the phrase where Kornicker had left off. 'Endorsed to Michael Rust; that's me!' said Rust, looking eagerly in his eyes, and pressing his thin finger on his own breast: 'me—!'

'If you tell me that by way of news, you're late in the day, my man,' replied the other. 'I know that Michael Rust is you, and that you are Michael Rust; I think I ought to.' And for the first time in the course of that evening, Kornicker closed his eyes, and shook inwardly; thereby indicating that he was enjoying a hearty laugh.

'You will take these notes,' said Rust, without paying any regard either to his merriment or his observation, 'and sue on them at once; arrest Grosket, fling him into prison, and there let him lie and rot, until his stubborn heart be broken; until he crawl to my very feet and lick the dust from them. If he will not bend, why, then,' muttered he, setting his teeth, and his black eye dilating, 'let him *die*; his blood be upon his own head. The fool! the vain, weak, short-sighted fool! He knew not that I had these in my grasp,' said he, taking up the notes and shaking them as if in menace at the object of his wrath. 'Now let him writhe in his den; and moan, and rave, and blaspheme to the walls that shut him in. There is no escape. No, no; the jail is his home; the felon his room-mate; ho! ho! What a glorious thing law is! Now, then, Enoch, *friend* Enoch!

conscientious Enoch! we'll see in whose hand the game lies!'

There is always something in the display of any fierce emotion, no matter how subdued may be the manner or tone it assumes, so it be connected with stern, unflinching purpose, that quells all lighter feelings in others; and there was that in the glowing eye of Rust, and in the convulsive working of his thin features, and in the sharp, hissing tones of his voice, although he spoke scarcely above a whisper, which effectually banished from Kornicker all farther inclination for merriment; but at the same time he felt no great complacency in being in the employ of a man who kept such dark and bitter feelings garnered up in his heart.

'Is it Enoch Grosket, the one who used to be here, you want put in limbo?' inquired he, after looking in the face which bent over his; 'why, I thought ——'

'*Think* what you please,' replied Rust, fiercely. 'I explain my motives to no one. My instructions to you are simple. Get the money for these notes from Enoch Grosket, down to the last farthing. Listen to no offers of compromise; and whatever law will do toward adding wretchedness to poverty, let him feel!'

Rust spoke sternly and peremptorily, too much so for his own purpose; and he observed that Kornicker eyed him with a look of suspicion, and once or twice shook his head, as if the duty prescribed did not suit his taste. He saw that he must play his card nicely; and to allay any feeling of compunction which might be gaining ground with Kornicker, he said, as if speaking to himself: 'Much as that man Grosket has wronged me; much as he has threatened me; anxious as he now is to ruin me; I'll deal more fairly with him than he has done with me. I'll be open in all my dealings. I'll not stab in the dark, as he has done. He

shall know who his opponent is; and let him cope with him if he can.' 'Mr. Kornicker,' said he, addressing his clerk, as if unconscious that what he had just said had reached that gentleman's ear, 'be strict in conducting that matter with Grosket; but deal fairly with him. Let every proceeding be such as will bear the light; no quirking nor quibbling; no double-dealing; no, no. Give him law; law, only law; that's all I ask. I'll not let anger sway my actions, whatever effect it may have on my words. Did I not step in between him and starvation? Did I not lift himself and his family from the very dirt; and for five long years did I not furnish the very bread which they ate; and what then? The viper turned upon me and stung me; and even now, as I have recently learned, is endeavoring to thwart me in schemes upon which depend all my prospects in life. Notwithstanding all this, Mr. Kornicker, I now ask only justice. Other men might be revengeful, and might long for his very life; but it's not so with me! Michael Rust seeks but justice. Now, Sir, what's the first step you'll take upon those papers?' said he, pointing to the notes; 'how will you arrest him?'

Kornicker threw himself back in his chair, and putting his fingers together at the points, and forming two hollows of his hands, looked at them with an air of profound deliberation, as if selecting one out of several hundred modes of commencing a suit. Having, as he supposed, duly impressed Rust with the importance of the undertaking, he took his snuff-box from his pocket, and having balanced it for some minutes, in great absence of mind, in one hand, while with equal abstraction he held a pinch of snuff between the thumb and forefinger of the other, he replied, 'that he thought, upon the whole, it would be advisable to commence by *capias*;' after which he snuffed copiously.

'How soon can you begin?' inquired Rust.

‘As soon as I can get a writ,’ replied Kornicker, dusting the particles of snuff from his prominent feature with the back of his hand. ‘A blank costs two cents.’

‘Begin at once ; to-night !’ said Rust, pushing a handful of silver to him. ‘Have him in prison before midnight Spare no expense, but carry out my views.’

‘Why, you *are* quick upon the trigger,’ replied his clerk. ‘I can fill up the writ at once ; but it ’s eight o’clock ; the clerk’s office is shut, and we can’t get a seal ; so is the sheriff’s office, and we can’t get a deputy. It won’t do. We must wait until to-morrow.’

‘Time is gold now,’ muttered Rust, starting up. ‘Had I been warned sooner ; had that love-sick boy spoken but a few hours earlier, I might have had him in my grasp. While I am here, with my hands tied by the empty forms of courts and legal proceedings, Grosket is at work. Who knows what a single night may bring forth ! In a single night, nay, in a single hour, the schemes of a whole life might be overthrown ; and with such a man as Grosket to cope with, the danger is doubled. *Would* that I had him here ! with no law to hold up its warning finger at me ; with my gripe upon his throat ! Good Enoch ! my dear, best-beloved Enoch ! would that I had you here ! So nothing can be done until to-morrow ?’ said he, abruptly, turning to Kornicker, as he recollected that he was not alone ; ‘and I must sit here, shackled, until then ?’

‘As to the shackles,’ Mr. Kornicker replied, ‘that he knew nothing about them ; but as to issuing the writ before morning, it could n’t be done, that was plump !’ Saying which, he pushed back the money, and thrusting his hands in his pockets, whistled thoughtfully.

‘You ’ll be here early in the morning ?’ said Rust.

‘I rather think I will,’ replied Kornicker, ‘unless the house should take fire, in which case I shall withdraw.’

Rust looked at him for an explanation, which Kornicker immediately gave by pointing to the coverlet under the table, and informing him that they were then in his bed-chamber; at the same time volunteering the information that during the day the bed itself was placed in a spare room in the garret, occupied only by a cat and her family; which said cat and family were a source of much annoyance to him, from their being addicted to sleeping on his bed during the whole time that it was not occupied for the same purpose by himself. ‘Cats had n’t fleas; there was some comfort in that. If it had been a dog and family, he should have resisted strenuously.’

Rust, at the conclusion of his observations, turning to him, merely said: ‘If nothing can be done here, I must be at work where my time will not be lost. I shall expect you to be ready early in the morning. Good-night!’

At an early hour on the following day, Mr. Kornicker sallied out of his office, and bent his steps toward the City Hall, bearing in his hand a small slip of printed paper, whereby the Sheriff of the City and County of New-York was commanded by the People of the State of New-York to take the body of Enoch Grosket, defendant, if he should be found in his bailiwick, and him safely keep, and to have him before the Judges of the Supreme Court on a certain day and at a certain place, to answer unto Michael Rust, plaintiff, for the non-performance of certain promises and undertakings, etc., to the damage of the said plaintiff of three thousand dollars. And on the back of the same paper was a small memorandum, containing a hint to the said sheriff to hold the defendant to bail in six thousand dollars.

Thus armed and equipped according to law, Mr. Kornicker

presented himself at the sanctum of that officer. It was a small room, with a partition a few feet high thrown across it, to shield the sanctity of the magistrate and his deputies from contaminating contact with the rabble members of the bar. Behind this partition was a sloping desk, on which lay a number of large ledgers; and looking over one of these, stood a stoutish man, with a round, full face, thin whiskers, and an aquiline nose. He had a gold chain hanging over his vest, and there was not a little pretension in the cut of his garments. As Mr. Kornicker entered, he put his pen in his mouth, paused in his employment, and looked at him over the partition.

‘Here ’s a gentleman whose flint wants fixing,’ said Kornicker, handing him the writ. ‘I want it done at once. Screw him tight.’

The man nodded; and taking the paper, after glancing at it, turned to a person who sat behind the partition, invisible to Kornicker, and said: ‘Mr. Kipe, can’t you do this?’

Mr. Kipe rose up; a mild man, six feet high, surmounted by a broad-brimmed hat, from beneath which straggled a few locks of hair, which had once been iron-gray, but which were now fast verging toward white. His nose was bulbous, being neither Roman nor pug; his eyes dark, and paternal in their expression; his neck was buried in the folds of a white cravat; and in his hand he carried a cane, probably for the combined purposes of self-aid and self-defence.

Fixing his hat more securely on his head, and placing his cane under his arm, he drew from his pocket a small leathern case, containing his spectacles; and having placed them on his nose, and adjusted and readjusted them several times, he proceeded to peruse the document submitted to his inspection. Having completed this, he gently inquired if Grosket lived a great way off; and being informed that he did not,

ne said, 'he rather thought he'd like the job.' This conclusion having been happily reached, the man with a Roman nose entered the writ in one of the ledgers which lay in front of him, after which Mr. Kipe placed it in a large pocket-book, in company with about a dozen documents of the same description, and looking affectionately at his collection, he shook his head with a melancholy smile, and said :

'Folks is beginning to talk of abolishing imprisonment for debt. It's an innivation as will bring no good ; and it's the hardest-hearted proceeding agin us deputies as has been done yet. It'll use us all up. Forty year I've been a deputy, and never heerd of the like of it afore ; never ! never ! Arter this, rascals will be gentlemen, and deputies will be beggars ! Ah !'

CHAPTER XII.

A SAD blow was this quarrel between her father and Ned Somers, to Kate Rhoneland ; for so fierce and bitter was the anger of the old man, whenever he was alluded to, and so opprobrious were the epithets which he showered upon him, that at last his name was never mentioned between them. But had Kate forgotten him ? or had she forgotten the day on which he had met her in the street, and had turned about, and had walked at her side ; and had, among other things, told her that he loved her more than all the world beside ? Or had she forgotten how she had uttered a few words in reply ; but how, or what they were, she knew not ; except that they made his eyes grow bright with smiles, as he whispered in her ear that she was ‘ his own dear little Kate, and made him very happy ; ’ and that they had loitered on, hour after hour, quite forgetting that she had any where to go, or any thing to do, or any thing to speak of, or think of ; or that there was any one else in the wide world but themselves ? No, no. Kate had forgotten none of these things. A happy day was that ! They had talked over occurrences which had taken place long before. They had explained away trifling difficulties and misunderstandings, which had been the source of much thought and anxiety to both ; and which (although Kate did not confess thus much) had often caused her eyes to fill with tears, when she was alone, and there were none to see her ; and which accounted for the bright drops which her father had sometimes discovered on her cheek as she lay asleep, when he came to take

a last look at her, at night ; and which had caused him to ponder and dream until he forgot them amid his own troubles. Thus was that day spent ; a green spot in memory. Through quiet, out-of-the-way streets, they took their way ; through quarters which the bustle of the world never reached, and where the rumbling of the city was heard only in the distance, like the hum of a mighty hive ; beneath tall trees with their long branches drooping to the earth, as if to protect the soil which made them so great and beautiful as they were ; and their deep-green leaves, now glittering with sunlight, now dark in shadow, hanging motionless, or quivering on their slender stems, with a scarcely audible sound, as if whispering to each other ; and through the thick foliage were glimpses of the blue sky, with here and there a fleecy cloud loitering on its broad bosom, like a sail at sea ; while beneath, the earth was checkered with a mosaic of light and shadow. Who can tell the happiness of those young hearts on that day ? Who can tell why sky and earth seemed so beautiful ; and even the faded old houses about them, pent up in dim streets, with great trees nodding over them like dozing sentinels, seemed to wear a gay, glad look ?

How much they had to say ! And yet, when it was said, and they had parted, and Kate was recalling it to mind in her own room, how little there was in it ! How familiarly she had leaned on his arm, as if she had known him from childhood ! and how fondly he looked down in her face ! and how strange it seemed to call him 'Ned,' when she had never before addressed him except as Mr. Somers ! Yet 'Ned' sounded better ; much better than 'Mr. Somers ;' and so did 'Kate' than 'Miss Rhoneland.' Poor little Kate ! There was much food for thought in all that had passed that day ; much food for happy thought. All that had occurred was dreamed over ; and never had time flown by so rapidly.

How surprised she had been, on hearing a clock striking the hour, to discover that he and she had been walking for four long hours, and that Ned, like a downright vagabond, as he was, and as she told him he was, had contrived (she of course not being aware of the matter) to get her at the longest possible distance from home ; so that when they returned, it took them a good hour to get back ; nor did he even then, as she shrewdly suspected, select the most direct course ; but as she was not certain on this point, she said nothing about it ; but merely told him ‘ that she would be careful the next time she trusted herself to his guidance ; ’ which no doubt she was.

Well ! the happiest day in our lives must have an end ; and that day, which certainly was the happiest day in the life of Kate, at last came to an end ; and Ned Somers was gone, having escorted her to the door and even into the entry, from which, however, he retreated with some precipitancy on discovering that he had inadvertently, for the first time in his life, pressed his lips to hers, and that if he remained there, the same inadvertent offence might be repeated to an indefinite extent ; an occurrence which, of course, under present circumstances, could not fail to be in the highest degree lacerating to the feelings of both.

She never spoke to her father about what Ned had said ; for Ned had told her that he did not wish to ask her of him until he could look him in the face, and tell him ‘ that he could support her as she always had been accustomed to live ; and that it was his daughter, and his daughter only, that he asked. ’ He told her, too, that that time would come soon, and that they were both young, (for Kate was then barely sixteen ;) and Kate had said, ‘ Oh yes, entirely too young to get married, ’ although Somers had differed from her on that score ; but from that day forth, Ned had

constantly been at the house at all hours, until he was regarded as one of themselves, and grew to be almost as great a favorite with the old man as with Kate herself; and both looked hopefully forward to the time when Ned's prospects, which were already brightening fast, should be firmly established.

Things had gone on thus until Michael Rust came; and with him came a change in all else. There was evidently something between him and Rhoneland, hidden from all others, which had a powerful influence upon the latter, who more than once spoke to Kate of their new guest, inculcating upon her respect and deference to him. At other times the old man spoke to her of observing a strict economy; of saving every farthing, to lay it up in case of need, speaking of gold as if it were omnipotent, and seeming to gloat over it with a miser's hunger; yet such had never been his disposition until Michael Rust came. But that was not all; for, although it would almost have broken her heart to see the fine-souled old man which her father always had been, sinking down into a mere machine for hoarding dollars, with no other instinct or aim in life; it was not that which lay heaviest at her heart. From what had dropped from him at intervals, she knew that there was a stronger bond between him and Rust than the mere obsequiousness which avarice pays to wealth. There was the quick, restless motion of the body when Rust's name was mentioned; the watchful, irresolute glance of the eye; ever ready to detect his slightest motion, like that of one ever in fear, and ever on his guard against attack. There was the nervous, anxious desire to propitiate, to remove any thing which might give offence; and yet unaccompanied by any of those tokens of goodwill which indicate that these acts spring from the heart and not from the fears; all showing that the tie which

connected them was not one of love on the part of Rhoneland.

At last Rust, who for a long time had troubled himself about no one but Rhoneland, seemed to discover that he had a daughter, and that that daughter was exceedingly beautiful, and that the old man doated on her. He also discovered that a certain young man by the name of Edward Somers came to the house frequently; much more frequently than was proper for a young man not connected with the family, and not having any thing in particular to bring him there. Having made this discovery, and thinking it desirable to get Somers out of the way, he set to work to attack his character; not openly, but in that most assassin-like of all modes, by throwing out inuendoes, and by repeating rumors which he had heard, but which of course he did not believe, and which he mentioned only that his friend Jacob might know what absurd stories were afloat. They were never repeated in the presence of Kate, but to the old man when he and Rust were alone. Rhoneland, however, stood out stoutly for his young friend. He said, 'that the reports were lies, and he did not believe them.' Neither did Rust. 'He was astonished that people would circulate such tales; for Ned was a fine, frank, open-hearted fellow, although he must confess that he had not liked Ned at first, for he thought he had a 'down look,' (which, by the way, was rather remarkable, as Ned always held his head peculiarly erect, as if to look all the world in the face.) Rust, however, kept at work, rasping, and rubbing, and picking away at Ned's character; inventing a thousand things which had never happened, and whispering to the old man, under promises of secrecy, remarks which Ned had made of him, which were not very respectful, and which Rust was surprised (considering what a fine fellow Ned was) that Ned should make. His success,

however, in sowing suspicion was not very great, until the conversation with Harrison opened Rhoneland's eyes for the first time to a fact which he had never before suspected; that Ned's visits were paid to his daughter; and that his child had given her affections to him. On the heels of that came the encounter with Michael Rust, and his insinuations, that Ned was hovering round his daughter with the purpose of decoying her from him, and deserting her when there was no hope left for her but the grave.

It was no wonder then that when Somers was driven from the house, the old man hugged his daughter in his arms, and wept over her, and kissed her fair forehead, and pressed her face to his bosom, and rested his cheek upon her head, while his whole frame shook with heavy sobs of mingled joy and indignation; nor that he kept near her the whole of that day, scarcely suffering her to quit his sight, locking the house-door, and always opening it himself when there was a knock, lest it should be Somers, returning to lure his child from him. Over and over again he begged her not to leave him; conjuring her not to see Somers again, and telling her that Ned was a scoundrel, and that the only mode of saving herself from destruction was by never meeting him again.

And did Kate never see Somers again? But once and only once. She knew that her father wronged him. She knew how long and patiently he had been waiting and working for her. She knew too that Michael Rust had his own designs upon her; for Michael Rust's admiration was too undisguised, and his speech too devoid of concealment, to leave her in doubt. She knew too, although he had studiously concealed it from her, that he was Ned's enemy, and she strongly suspected that he was at the bottom of the trouble between Ned and her father. She knew all this, and she thought it but right that Ned should know it too; for she had hitherto concealed much that had passed between

Rust and herself, lest it should lead to difficulties between Somers and her father's guest. But nothing was to be gained by concealment now ; and she felt, that to see Somers, to tell him all that she knew, all that she had seen, all that she had heard, and all that she suspected, was but her duty, and that to refrain from doing so would be very, *very* wrong. If she erred, it was an error which many will forgive.

And under this conviction, she met him again, with her young heart full almost to bursting. She told him every thing that she knew or suspected of Rust, and his plans with reference to herself ; she begged him to watch him ; but above all, to incur no risk himself. She told him too that he and she must meet no more ; but she assured him, whatever others might say, or do, or think, that she believed not the slanders circulated against him ; that she loved him still ; that in her heart of hearts he was still the same to her that he always had been ; and that he ever would be, until that heart ceased to beat. She said this, and she said a thousand times more, for she was meeting him with the full resolve to meet him no more without her father's consent ; with the full knowledge that their parting must be at all events a long one, perhaps a final one.

They went over the same spots which they had lingered over in happier hours ; the same out-of-the-way haunts, where there were few to observe them ; under the same old trees which stretched out their long branches, now naked and stripped of foliage ; along the same bye-streets through which they had loitered on the day when he first learned that she loved him. They spoke but little ; for all that Ned could do was to assert that the tales which had been repeated to her father were false ; to breathe forth vengeance against the slanderer, and to suggest the propriety of belaboring Rust soundly, and running the risk of the flogging falling on the right shoulders.

And all that Kate could say in return was to repeat her full belief that Ned was all that she had supposed and wished him to be.

Thus the day lingered on, and the time came for parting. They said but little, for there were no bright prospects to cheer them on: a few words of encouragement faintly spoken, for their hearts whispered that they were vain; a few broken words of hope, uttered in so sad a tone that they seemed a mockery; a stifled 'God bless you, Kate!' as he pressed her to his heart; a 'Good-bye, Ned,' half sobbed, and they parted; and Kate hurried to her own room, and hiding her face in her hands, wept the bitterest tears that she had ever shed. But the agony was over; and now she told her father that they had met; and why; and that they were to meet no more until he could vindicate himself. The old man heard her out, contrary to her expectations, without an expression of anger, and merely said, that 'it was very well; that she did right to see him no more;' and that was all.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT about eleven o'clock on a fine day, a tall elderly man, habited in a long-skirted blue overcoat, with a broad-brimmed hat on his head, his neck enveloped in the ample folds of a white cravat, the ends of which toyed pleasantly with the morning air; and having in his hand a cane, whose top was carved in a miniature likeness of a dog with a melancholy countenance, slowly descended the precipitous flight of stone steps which form the rear mode of egress from the City Hall. Having safely reached the foot of them, the elderly gentleman paused, rubbed one hand gently over the other, as if congratulating himself that one of the perils of the day was over, and then walked out into the Park, and deliberately set his watch by the town-clock. Being a cautious man, however, and one who piqued himself on doing every thing better than any one else, and upon being always right when all the rest of the world was wrong, and on being in general superior to the ordinary run of mankind; and being aware that the town-clock had four faces, which always differed in opinion as to the hour; and being too knowing to be taken in by any small trick of that kind, he winked to himself, and took the pains to make the circuit of the building, and successively to inspect each face of the aforesaid public time-keeper; and having ascertained that the majority was with the one which he had first consulted, he pulled his waistcoat very high up in front, and dropped his watch into a small pocket in the waistband of his trowsers. After which, he buttoned his coat and set about his day's work with no little complacency and good-humor.

The direction which he took led to one of the poorer parts of the town; and although he walked slowly, it was not long before he was in the thick of those narrow, ill-ventilated streets, hemmed in by decaying houses and reeking cellars, which proclaim, plainer than words, that vice and want, and a thousand other ills which canker the heart, and eat up all that is noble in human nature, are lurking in their dark recesses.

Mr. Kipe, for he it was, paused in front of one of the dim holes where a dozen wretched beings, ill clad and ill fed, were herding together, and wondered why they *would* live in such places; and why they did not pay more attention to their dress; for some of them were half naked. 'It's quite indelicate!' said he, mentally. 'Mrs. Kipe would faint if she saw it. I declare, I won't be positive — no, yes — no; yet I do think one of them is a woman; I really *do* think that rag is meant for a petticoat. It *must* be a woman,' said he, continuing his investigations in a cautious manner. 'It is a woman. Ah! it's agin natur.'

There was no doubt of the truth of his suspicion; half of them were females. Squatting and crouching there, they raised their bleary eyes toward him in sullen indifference; too miserably wretched to heed or resent the look of disgust and surprise which met theirs, other than by a heartless laugh or a ribald jest; too callous to feel, and too broken down in body and soul to taunt. The deputy-sheriff shook his head: for although he had often been amid scenes where the strong heart was wrung; where the debtor, ground down by creditors with hearts of flint and eyes greedy of gold, was struggling beneath the fangs of the law, and crying for indulgence and mercy; although he had seen the calm, pale look of despair; the silent but resolute face of the man who had parted with his all, and finally yielded his body for the

gold which he could not pay; and the wife clasping his neck, and his children clinging to him; ay, actually showing marks of affection to a man who was penniless; yet he had rarely encountered a den like this. He had only witnessed suffering and despair in their first stages. Had he desired to see the human soul when hope had darkened into desperation; when friends had fallen off, or, less painful than that, had died; when the body had been wasted, and the blood dried up, and yet had yielded no gold; when even that untiring thing, a creditor, had grown weary of his prey, and had flung his victim adrift, to find none to sympathize, no path open, no home left, and even hope dead; he should have lingered a little longer; and in common with the born thief, the hardened courtesan, the reeling drunkard, and the savage brawler, he would have found those whom the sun of prosperity had once warmed, and who once had little dreamed in what foul haunts they would linger out the remnant of life which was yet in store for them.

Mr. Kipe, however, having already expressed his opinion, merely shook his head disapprovingly, on concluding his investigation, and said nothing, but kept on, now turning from one narrow street into another; at one time stumbling along broken pavements and dilapidated steps; at another half stifled with the exhalations which steamed up from reeking kennels and under-ground dwellings, until he finally emerged into a broader street. Still the dwellings were of a poor character. Stopping in front of one of these, he drew out his pocket-book, took from it a small slip of paper, looked at it, then at the house; coughed several times; cleared his throat emphatically; fixed his hat firmly on his head; buttoned his coat to the chin, placed his cane under his left arm, and grasping the small paper firmly in his right hand, like one preparing for a mortal struggle, precipitated himself

headlong into a dark alley. Stumbling over a broken pail and a few of the minor articles of a domestic description which usually beset benighted alleys and dim stairways, the sheriff's deputy finally caught sight of daylight in a small yard to which the passage led, and found himself at the door of a dilapidated house.

It was a small faded building, two stories high, sinking and crumbling away, like a person weak in the side. Narrow windows, cracked and dust-covered, looked out into the dark yard. A broken flower-pot stood on a window-sill, with a stunted bush in it, bearing a single yellow leaf; and in another was a half-starved shrub bearing a drooping flower. On the roof, which abutted on other roofs, and was overlooked by tall buildings, a lean cat was dozing in the sun, as if endeavoring to forget hunger in sleep. Every thing bore the stamp of starvation. The windows were patched with rags or pieces of paper; the bricks from ruined chimneys had toppled down, and were lying in masses on the roof; there were great gaping seams between the boards, showing the plaster within; the door had sagged away, and the shutters of more than one window hung by a single hinge. On the door-steps a child was sleeping, and from a narrow window a thin face peeped cautiously out, wondering what a stranger could want in that dreary quarter.

The sheriff's deputy, however, was familiar with the ground. He was in the habit of fishing in troubled waters; and it was not the first time that he had drawn from this very place food for the gaol.

Without asking a question, he quietly stepped over the sleeping child, and stooping as he entered, to prevent his hat coming in contact with the top of the low door-way, he ascended a crooked staircase, carefully picking his way;

grumbling at its inconvenient formation, and indulging a few mental anathemas against old houses in general. At the head of the stairs a door was ajar; and without knocking, he pushed it open, entered, and shut it; standing ready to place his back against it, in case he should observe any indication of an attempt on the part of the occupant to escape. This precaution, however, was unnecessary; for the only person there was a man of about forty, with a stern, resolute face, a sharp, gray eye, and strongly built, who was writing at a table, which, with the exception of a bed in a corner, and two chairs, constituted the entire furniture of the room. He merely looked up as his visitor entered, and without removing his eyes from him, said:

‘Methinks that common courtesy entitles a man to a knock at his door before his room is entered. Though perhaps,’ he added, bitterly, ‘the owner of such quarters as these is only entitled to courtesy according to his means.’

To neither of these remarks did Mr. Kipe make any reply; but gradually sidling up to the speaker, until he came within arm’s length, he tapped him on the shoulder, and said:

‘I arrest you, Sir. It’s a very onpleasant duty; but it is a duty, and must be done. Here’s the writ.’

The man eyed him for a moment, apparently meditating what course to pursue; while Mr. Kipe grasped the head of the dog on his cane, and assumed an air of desperate determination. At last the man took the paper from his hand, and read it through, without moving or speaking, although his face became somewhat flushed, as he read. Then he merely uttered the words, ‘Michael Rust!’

‘He’s the plaintiff,’ said Mr. Kipe, ‘and you are the defendant, Enoch Grosket. It’s onpleasant, Sir, quite onpleasant; but I’m a deputy-sheriff, Sir; and you’re a defendant;

and here's the writ; and duty must be done. That's the long and short of it.'

'So this is the end of the game,' said Grosket to himself; 'this the reward of five years of servitude, the most vile and degraded that ever bound man to his fellow-man. A noble harvest have I reaped for the seed that I have sown!—a glorious close to my labors! But it is what I might have looked for. Ah! Michael Rust! well have you carried out your schemes!—a pleasant part have you played in my family! You have sent child and wife both to their graves; the one dishonored, the other broken-hearted; and now, a prison for the father. Be it so, Michael Rust; but the game is not yours yet. If you win it, it must be at the cost of a struggle which will rack all your sinews. I do not understand this claim,' said he, in a musing tone; 'three thousand dollars!' I owe *him* nothing. What can it be? 'Edward Kornicker, attorney.' Who's he?' he asked, raising his eyes from the paper to those of Mr. Kipe. 'I never heard of him.'

Mr. Kipe drew down the corners of his mouth, and smiled; at the same time saying, that Mr. Kornicker was a young man of some merit, but rather wild—a *little* wild.

Having said this, he took a seat in the vacant chair, and placed his hat on the table; at the same time telling Mr. Grosket that if he had any bail to offer, he would go with him in search of it. If he had n't, he would be under the less pleasant necessity of escorting him to jail; and in either case, that he, the said Mr. Kipe, being a public functionary, and much pressed by business, would take it as a personal favor if Mr. Grosket would hasten his movements as much as possible.

Grosket shook his head despairingly.

'No,' said he; 'the sum is too large—six thousand dol

lars ! I know no one who will become bail for me in such an amount. Had it come but a day later, one single day later,' said he, clasping his hands tightly together, '*he*, not *I*, would have been the victim !'

'Well, Sir,' said Mr. Kipe, 'there being no bail, in course there is no alternative. You must go to gaol ; rooms small, but well ventilated. You 'll find yourself very comfortable there arter a fortnight or so. There is folks that quite like the place.'

Grosket made no reply to this comforting remark ; but stood with his hand resting on the table, and his brows knit in deep thought. At last he said, as if coming to some sudden resolution :

'At least, it's worth the trial. I am working for *him*, and if I fail, I shall be no worse off than I now am. Come,' said he ; 'I know a man who I think will become bail for me. If he do n't—if he do n't,' said he in an under-tone—'Well, well, I 'll try it.'

'Who is he ?' inquired Mr. Kipe, cautiously.

'No matter,' replied Grosket ; 'you 'll see presently.'

Mr. Kipe felt far from satisfied with this reply. It had the appearance of evasion ; and a vague apprehension of receiving no other bail than that cheap and convenient kind, generally known as 'leg-bail,' flitted across his imagination, puzzling him not a little ; for Grosket was a brawny fellow, whose thews and sinews were not to be trifled with. Mr. Kipe thought that he was in a crisis ; and was beginning to deliberate seriously on the propriety of raising a hue-and-cry on the spot, without waiting for further indication of a disposition to escape, when the prisoner, apparently observing his perplexity, cut it short by adding :

'Do n't be frightened, my old fellow ; I 'm acting in good

faith. If I do n't get bail, I'll go with you as quietly as you could wish.'

'And you are out-and-out in earnest? You mean to get it? No gammon, is there?'

"I'll get it if I can: if I can't, I'm your prisoner. I'll play you no tricks.'

'Good!' ejaculated the deputy-sheriff, quietly pocketing his writ, and placing his hat on his head. I'm your man now: which way do you want to go?'

Grosket named the direction; and in a few moments they were on their way to Jacob Rhoneland's.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOR a long time Enoch Grosket and the sheriff's deputy walked on without exchanging a word; but as they proceeded, Grosket's brow began to darken, his lips were firmly set together, and his pace quickened until his companion could scarcely keep up with him.

'Come on, Sir,' said Enoch, abruptly turning to him. 'Michael Rust is the Devil, but he has driven to desperation one whom he has drilled in all his ways, and who has had a hand in all his doings for years. Would to God he could say they were all what they should have been! Let him look to himself. He may chain the body, but my tongue shall speak. Ah! Michael Rust! Michael Rust! you were never nearer destruction than when you thought me in your power!'

His speed soon increased to such a degree, that although Mr. Kipe had apparently been constituted with an especial eye to rapid locomotion, yet that gentleman's lower members were kept at their full stretch. Once or twice the deputy suggested to his companion that the day was warm for the season, and that he had been more active twenty years ago; to both of which remarks Grosket assented, without in the least diminishing his speed; nor did he pause to draw breath until they had reached Rhoneland's house.

'This is the place,' said Grosket. 'If he's wise, he'll not refuse me.'

He knocked at the door, which was opened by Kate. She knew neither of them; and in reply to his question, informed him that her father was at home. Grosket paused for a

moment as his eye rested on her bright face ; and something like a tear rose in it, as he thought of his own lost child ; but he checked the feeling which induced it, and turning, said :

‘ So you ’re his daughter ? ’

‘ His only child,’ replied Kate, anxiously.

‘ Poor child ! ’ muttered Grosket ; ‘ God help her ! ’

He muttered this rather to himself than to her, and passed in ; but neither his manner nor the words, low as was the tone in which they were spoken, escaped her ; and with a heart sinking with apprehension of she knew not what — for the appearance of any stranger at the house filled her with dread now — she admitted him into the room where her father was.

It was the same poorly-furnished apartment in which the old man was when first introduced to the reader. He occupied the same seat, and sat almost in the same attitude, with his hands clasped over his knees, his chin bowed down on his breast, his dark eyes peering from beneath his shaggy white brows, and apparently watching the crumbling embers in the fire-place. His face was wan and haggard, even beyond its wont ; and he had a watchful, suspicious look, which was not natural to him. As the door opened, he started, glanced quickly at the strangers, then at his daughter, as if she and they were in some manner associated in his mind.

‘ Do n’t go, Kate ! do n’t go ! I want you here,’ said he, in a quick, anxious tone, seeing that she was closing the door without entering ; ‘ do n’t go, my child. Our business is no secret.’

As he said this, he cast an inquiring look at the two, to ascertain that he was correct, and pointed with a hesitating finger to a chair.

Mr. Kipe bowed gratefully, took it immediately, removed

his hat, placed his cane between his knees, ran his fingers through his hair, and looked up at the ceiling, after the manner of persons who are occasionally present at interviews in which they have no concern, and in which they have no intention of meddling.

Grosket, however, stood where he was, with his hat on, looking steadily in the agitated face of the old man. At last he said :

‘So you do n’t know me?’

Rhoneland eyed him for a long time ; at last he shook his head.

‘Yet you *ought* to,’ said Grosket, in the same tone. ‘Look at me again.’

Again the old man bent his eyes upon his face, and studied his features ; and certainly they were not of a character to be easily forgotten ; but again he was at fault ; he did not know him.

‘It is strange!’ muttered the other ; ‘a friend is often forgotten, but an enemy rarely. My name is Grosket — Enoch Grosket.’

A bright flush passed over the old man’s face as he heard the name, and he half rose from his chair. ‘Yes, yes,’ said he, quickly ; ‘I know now ; the friend of Michael Rust. Kate,’ said he, suddenly turning to the girl, who was leaning over his chair ; ‘you can go — go, Kate ; leave the room, my child. This is only a friend of Mr. Rust’s.’

‘It’s scarcely worth while,’ said Grosket, ‘for what I have to say of Rust will soon be spoken in the open day ; ay, in his teeth will I fling my charges ; before the whole world will I make them ; I will brand him with a mark that he will carry to his grave ! No, no, Jacob Rhoneland. I’m *not* a friend of Michael Rust, and he’ll find it so. I’ve too many wrongs to settle with him, for that.’

‘Not a friend of his !’ ejaculated Rhoneland : ‘then what

brings you *here*? Do n't you know that I am his friend? — an old friend? He calls me his best friend.'

Grosket's lip curled, as he answered :

'*That* friendship has lasted too long for the good of one of you. I need not mention who that one is. I am come to end it. He was my friend once. God save me from another like him! God! how he loved me!' said he, setting his teeth; 'and in return,' added he, in a cold tone, 'do n't I love him? Such a love! Give me but life and liberty, life and liberty,' said he, dropping his assumed tone, and breaking out in a burst of fierce vehemence, 'and by every hope that man can have, I swear to crush him; to grind him to the earth, body and soul; to blight him as he has blighted others; and, as far as man can do so, to thwart every scheme, wither every hope, and to make him drag out his life, a vile, spurned, detested object, hated by man, driven from the pale of society, with every transgression stamped upon him, and beyond redemption in this world! What his prospects may be hereafter, none can tell but HE.' He raised his hat reverently as he spoke, and his tone, from high excitement, calmed into deep solemnity.

'My errand here,' said he, turning to Rhoneland, 'is simple; my story a short one. I was Michael Rust's friend — his tool, if you will. Through his agency I am a beggar, and my wife and child are in their graves. This did not satisfy him. I am now arrested at his suit for a debt of three thousand dollars. I cannot pay it. I have not that sum in the world; but I cannot go to prison. It would frustrate all my views. I must be at large to work. Let me have but a month of freedom, and Michael Rust will be glad to exonerate me from all claims, and to beg me on his knees to stand his friend. I am come to ask you to be my bail. The sum is six thousand dollars.'

'Me! *me*!' exclaimed Rhoneland; 'I your bail! and

against Michael Rust! — my friend Rust! Oh, no; never, never!’

‘It’s more for your interest than mine,’ replied Grosket, calmly. ‘If you do not, you’ll repent it.’

Rhoneland twisted his fingers together, and looked irresolutely at his daughter, and at the deputy, and then at Grosket, as if seeking counsel in their faces. At last he said, in a querulous tone:

‘You’re a stranger to me. I don’t know you. Why do you speak in riddles? Why do you come here to harass a broken-down old man? What do you mean?’

‘I mean *this*,’ replied Grosket: ‘Michael Rust is your friend because you *dare* not be his enemy. You *love* him because you dare not *hate* him. You would think it the brightest day of your life when he left your door to darken it no more. He has a hold on your fears, which he will make the means of ruin to you, and of wretchedness to those dearer to you than yourself. I speak of *her*,’ said he, seeing the old man looking timidly at Kate, who still hung over his chair, pale as death, but listening to every word. ‘I know his secrets, the tools with which he works; the very falsehood which he has fabricated against you, which you cannot disprove, but which *I* can.’

‘Falsehood!’ ejaculated Rhoneland.

‘Yes, falsehood. The time is come when, even with you, he must stand revealed in his true character.’

He stepped close to Rhoneland and whispered a few words in his ear. The old man sank back in his chair, his jaw relaxed, and his eyes half started from his head. His prostration lasted but for a moment. The next instant he started up, made a step toward Grosket, and grasped his hand in both of his.

‘Can you save me? can you save me? can you prove it untrue?’ gasped he; ‘Oh! do — *do*, for God’s sake!’

‘I can,’ replied Grosket.

‘And can you save her, *her*? my own child?’ exclaimed he, pointing to his daughter. ‘He would get her in his toils also.’

‘So help me God, I think I can!’ said Grosket, earnestly; ‘but to do so, I must be free; free only for one month. If I fail, the gaol may have its prey. Get me that delay, and I have no fears for the rest.’

‘Here’s the document,’ said Mr. Kipe, emerging from a profound revery, at the very moment that it was most requisite that his wits should be present, and producing a paper. ‘I’ll fill it up; you can sign it to once-t, and acknowledge it arterward.’

Rhoneland had reached out his hand to take the paper, but suddenly he hesitated and drew it back.

‘Must *he* know this?’ inquired he. ‘Is there no way in which it can be kept from *him*?’

Grosket looked at the deputy, who looked at the wall, and said that he ‘did n’t know as it could be perwented, convenient.’

‘Then you must choose between us,’ said Grosket, coldly. ‘I have said enough to satisfy you that I have the same power over you that Rust has, did I but choose to exert it. In suffering me to go to prison, you are permitting him to fetter the only person who can defeat his schemes, who can free you from his control, and prevent your child from being — Mrs. Rust.’

‘I’d die first! I’d die first!’ exclaimed the old man, frantically. ‘Me he might sacrifice, but he shall not harm *you*, Kate. I’ll do it, I’ll do it, for *your* sake, my child!’ said he, turning to her, and clasping her convulsively to him. ‘Come what may, I’ll do it. Come, Sir; I’m ready,’ said he. ‘I’ll

go at once. Lose no time, not a minute. Why do you wait?' said he, impatiently.

Without heeding him, Grosket went up to Kate, and took her hand respectfully: 'Trust me, no harm will come of this to him. At all events, none compared with what would have befallen both of you, had Michael Rust succeeded in his plans. If ever there was a man in this world in whom the Devil seems to live and move, it is Michael Rust. His sagacity and shrewdness have hitherto given him success; and hitherto he has laughed at law, and baffled detection; but his race is nearly run. He or I must fall; and of this one thing I am certain, *I* shall not. Now, Sir,' said he, turning to Rhoneland, 'we'll go. But I'm puzzled where to look for another bail.'

'I sha' n't be perticklar about that,' said Mr. Kipe, quietly; 'I know something about Jacob Rhoneland, and he's good enough for me. We'll get this acknowledged, and then you may go.'

Rhoneland went to the door, and opening it, led the way into the street.

Many important events in life balance upon the acts of a moment; and had Rhoneland lingered five minutes longer, he would never have linked himself to Grosket; for not that time had elapsed after their departure, when the door of the room where Kate was still sitting alone was opened, and Michael Rust entered. His look was eager, and his usually slow, shuffling step was rapid.

'Where's Jacob?' said he, looking round.

'He's gone out,' replied Kate, coldly.

'Gone out!' repeated he; and then suddenly changing his manner, he said: 'Well, I wanted him; but he has left you in his place. It was kind in him. He knew that I was

coming, Kate; that I doted on you; that there was nothing I loved like a little chat with you, and he could n't have the heart to disappoint me; so he let you remain. Ah! Kate! troubles are thickening upon me. Don't you sympathize with me, Kate? *I know* you do. *I'm sure* you do. You're a noble girl!

As he spoke, he advanced and took her hand. Kate drew it from him with an air of marked coldness; but not at all discouraged, he said:

'The sweetest hour of my life is when I steal away to sit by your side, Kate; to gaze in your face, and watch your eye as it peeps from under its long lashes, and the smile of your pouting, cherry lip. Ah! Kate!'

'Mr. Rust, this is really very unpleasant,' said Kate, with some anger in her manner. 'As my father's friend, you come to this house. As his friend, also, you should not forget what is due to his daughter, and should refrain from a style of conversation which cannot but be offensive.'

'How sweetly she speaks!' continued Rust, in his old strain; 'how charmingly she looks when excited! Ah! Kate, you're a little devil; you've made sad havoc here!' said he, placing his hand on his heart — 'sad havoc!'

'Mr. Rust,' returned Kate, angrily, 'unless you end this conversation, either you or I must leave the room.'

'I don't believe you're in earnest, Kate; on my soul, I don't; but I will drop it. But one favor — grant me only one favor. It's not a great one. I know you'll grant it, you're such an angel.'

Kate looked at him without speaking, and he went on:

'One kiss, Kate; one single sweet kiss from my own dear darling, to comfort me amid my misfortunes!'

Kate Rhoneland started up, her eyes flashing fire. 'Leave this house, Sir!'

'Ho! ho! how sweetly she orders!' exclaimed Rust, advancing toward her; 'how bright her eyes are! how the rich color plays along her cheek! how beautiful my own Kate is! 'Leave this house,' indeed! The thing's impossible, with such a charmer within it. Come, Kate; one kiss — *only* one; I'll tell no one, not even Ned. Upon my soul, I won't tell Ned.'

Kate made an attempt to spring past him, but he caught her by her dress, drew her to him, threw his arms about her waist, and pressed his lips to hers.

It was a dear kiss to him; for while she was struggling in his grasp, the door opened, a heavy blow lighted on his head, and he fell like a stone on the floor.

'If he's dead, be it so!' said a stern voice. But it was not so.

For a moment he lay like one who had seen his last sun; then he staggered up, pressed his hands to his temples, looked about him with a bewildered air, until his eyes encountered those of Jacob Rhoneland, bright with passion, and his whole frame quivering with rage. Gradually Rust's faculties began to rally, until he and Rhoneland stood gazing face to face.

'So it was *you*, was it, good Jacob?' said he, moving to the door. 'Thank you, my kind friend; I'll not forget you! Farewell, good Jacob. To your dying-day you shall have cause to remember that you struck Michael Rust.' He bowed profoundly to them, shut the door, and went out.

CHAPTER XV.

MORE than a week had elapsed since the rupture between Rhoneland and Rust; and during that period Jacob neither saw him nor heard from him. But in that interval he had become confirmed in his purpose of resistance; and had resolved to risk any thing, rather than submit to the mental bondage which had hitherto crushed him. Steadfast in this purpose, he quietly awaited the movements of his adversary.

On one fine afternoon, the bright rays of a setting sun streaming through the window fell upon the face of the old man, as he was dozing in his room, and awakened him. Starting to his feet, and casting his eyes hurriedly about him, he exclaimed: 'I tell you, no; I tell you, *no*, Michael Rust. It shall never be! Ah, Kate!' said he, looking about the room, and seeing no one except his daughter, 'it's you, is it? — only you? And I've been dreaming? Well, well; thank God it was no worse! It's strange I should have dreamed that Michael Rust wanted you, Kate, and asked for you. But no matter; kiss me, child. We've done with him. There's a comfort in that. We shall be quite happy — happy as we once were. Shall we not, Kate?'

Kate's lips quivered, as she pressed them to his forehead; and there was a busy little voice at her heart, which whispered a name, and brought up recollections that nearly choked her, as she said, in a low tone, 'Quite happy.'

'But, Kate,' said her father, placing an arm about her waist, while he put back her hair with his other hand, and looked anxiously in her face, 'you don't say, happy *as in old times*.'

Kate was silent. What could she say, when her young heart was breaking? But at last she *did* say:

‘It certainly will make me happier, much happier, than I have been, to know that you are once more yourself; that that evil, daring man has lost his influence over you, never to regain it; and that there is nothing to harass you and break you down, as there once was. All this makes me quite happy. Indeed it does!’ But there was that in her tone which belied her words, and Rhoneland observed it.

‘Ah! child, child!’ said he, shaking his head sorrowfully, ‘I see it all. Ned Somers has much to answer for. I loved and trusted him. God forgive him that he meditated so vile a wrong. He was to me as my own son. Had he loved you, Kate, openly and honorably, as a man should, and as you deserve to be loved, and had he asked you from me, I would not have said *no*, Kate. But he acted like a villain; and I’ve cast him off for ever.’

Kate became very pale, and her voice grew thick and husky, as she asked: ‘Father, will you answer me a question?’

‘Yes, Kate, a hundred,’ said he, drawing her more closely to him. ‘I’ll sit here all day long, and answer you. Now that *he* is gone, I feel quite young and boyish again; and nothing gladdens me more than your voice. Now go on. What is it?’

The girl took his hand in both hers, and looking steadily in his face, asked: ‘Who told you the tale which set you against Ned?’

‘Who?’ inquired Rhoneland; ‘who? Why, he — Rust.’

‘And have you never found, in the course of your dealings with that man, that he could forget or pervert the truth; or even invent a falsehood, when it served his own purpose?’

Jacob Rhoneland laughed to himself, in a low chuckling

tone, and rubbed his hands. 'What! lie?—Rust lie? Bless you, child, he does nothing else. Ha! ha! He's a deep one, depend on it.'

'And can you see no reason for his traducing Ned?' said she, the blood mounting to her face as she spoke. 'Was there no plan of his which Ned's presence here crossed, and which rendered it necessary to prejudice you against him?'

The old man pondered; looked at her, and then at the floor; and at last sank back in his chair, in a deep and unpleasant revery, from which he was only aroused by a knock at the door. 'Go to your room, Kate. It's Enoch. I'll open the door myself.'

Kate had scarcely left the room, and Jacob had not yet risen to obey the summons, when the door of the apartment opened, and Michael Rust walked in, as quietly and serenely as if nothing had happened.

'Good-evening, friend Jacob,' said he, bowing low, and speaking in his softest tone. 'I'm here again, you see. I could not give you up so soon. I could not let a trifling misunderstanding break off old friendship. I had n't the heart to do it, good Jacob. There was a severe struggle between pride and friendship, but friendship gained the day; and I have come with an open heart to offer you my most humble apology, and to ask you to forget and forgive. I feel that I took an unwarrantable liberty with Kate; but I loved her, Jacob, and was hurried too far by my feelings. I was wrong, and you acted as a father should. Let us forget the past, and be as we were.'

Michael extended his hand to him as he spoke; but Rhoneland neither took it, nor looked at it nor at him, nor uttered a word in reply; but sat looking out of the window, as if he heard not a word.

What was it that bowed the bold, bad man, who had

never yielded to Rhoneland before, but had trodden on his very neck, mocking at his sufferings, jeering at his agony of mind; returning threats for supplications, and taunts for tears; and now brought him a suppliant to his feet? Was it that strange, mysterious feeling which sometimes tells a man that the hour of his fate is approaching, and that his time is measured? Was the coming storm flinging its shadow over his path? Did he feel the earth sinking beneath his feet; and was he glad to grasp even at a decayed and shattered branch to hold him up? Or was it a part of a deeper policy? and was there yet something to be gained by clinging to his former dupe? It may have been a mixture of all these feelings; but certain it is that there he was; the same bowing, cringing hypocrite, with a tongue of oil and a heart of flint, endeavoring by soothing words and fawning lies once more to win back the man who had turned his back upon him. And equally certain it is, that a more unyielding, impenetrable, imperturbable piece of humanity he had never met with; for to all his fine sentences, allurements, and artifices of every kind, he received no reply.

‘This tack won’t do,’ thought Rust. ‘He won’t swallow honey. I’ll give him wormwood; but before that, one more attempt.’

‘Jacob, my friend,’ said he, drawing a chair nearer to him, seating himself, and sinking his voice; ‘perhaps you think I meant ill about your daughter?’

The old man moved restlessly, but was silent. Rust saw that he had touched the theme which would arouse him.

‘You were mistaken, my friend. Would that the intentions of all were as pure as mine.’

‘Speak of something else,’ replied Rhoneland, abruptly ‘I’ll not hear you on that subject.’

‘But you must,’ said Rust; ‘indeed you must, my old

friend. Not that I would annoy you ; but I came here for that express purpose, and *must* speak of her.'

Rhoneland looked keenly at him, and then at the floor, grasping the sides of the chair firmly, as if to restrain himself from violence, and Rust went on.

'I'm a man of few words, Jacob. Kate's a dear, sweet girl. I love her ; she loves me. Will you give her to me for a wife ?'

'It's false!' said Rhoneland, starting to his feet. 'If there be a single person in this world whom Kate hates more than another, it is you? Give her to *you* for a wife!' exclaimed he, in a bitter tone ; 'give her to *you* — you! I'd see her in her coffin first! Go, Michael Rust,' said he, extending his hands toward him ; 'your power is at an end in this house. Go!'

'Not quite, good Jacob!' said Rust, in a low, fierce tone. 'Not *quite*, good Jacob! I know what your plans are ; what your hopes are. I know what Enoch Grosket can do ; and in what he'll fail. He'll fail to vindicate Jacob Rhoneland. He'll fail to vindicate himself. He'll fail to overthrow Michael Rust. He and Jacob will soon be cheek by jowl with those whose good deeds have placed fetters on them. It's well, Jacob, it's well. We'll see who'll win the race. Pause, good Jacob ; pause before you decide. I give you five minutes. With Michael Rust for a son-in-law, you are safe.'

Rhoneland grew exceedingly pale ; and then summoning his resolution, said :

'I *have* decided. Though it cost me my life, you shall not marry Kate. Go! — Yet stop, Michael Rust. Before you go, know this : That I'll meet you, and defy you. You think that you can pervert an honest act of mine, so as to give it an appearance of crime. Do it if you can. I'll not

appeal to your sense of justice, for you have none; but if you fail, in turn I will hunt you down, until the law shall have its due. Now go.'

'Jacob Rhoneland, one word.'

'Not a syllable!' said the old man, grasping his heavy cane, and his face becoming purple with anger: 'viper! begone! If you darken my doors one moment longer, I'll fling you into the street!'

'Good-bye, Jacob,' said Rust; but not another word did he utter, as he left the house. His face was ashy pale; his features pinched and sharp; and he gnawed his lip until the blood came from it. Regardless of his appearance; with his long locks hanging in tangled flakes about his face, he hurried on. Dead and corpse-like as his features were, never was a fiercer spirit at work, to give life and energy to human frame; never was there a stronger concentration of dark passions in a human heart. His pace was quick and firm; there was no loitering; no pausing to think; no sign of irresolution. Darting along the street where the old man lived, and striking into one of the wider cross-streets of the city, he followed it until it brought him into Broadway. This he crossed, and plunged into that labyrinth of narrow streets which run between that and the Bowery. Threading them with the ready step of one familiar with their turns and windings, he neither paused to inquire his direction, nor to read the sign-boards; but even in the darkest and dreariest parts, his knowledge seemed certain and accurate. The twilight had darkened into night; and as he proceeded through the more fated parts of the city, dim figures, which like bats were shrouded in holes and dark hiding-places in the day-time, were beginning to flit about; yet he felt no hesitation nor fear. In the most gloomy and blighted of all these places he paused, cast a quick, suspicious glance about him, to see that none watched him, and

then darted up an alley between two houses, so ruined that their sagging gables met over it like a Gothic arch. Groping his way along, he came to a door at the foot of a flight of stairs which terminated the passage. He did not pause to knock; but pulling a string, opened it, and ascended a pitch-dark staircase, which in like manner was terminated at the upper end by a door. At this he knocked loudly. He was answered by a gruff voice which inquired :

‘Is that you, Joe?’

‘No,’ replied Rust.

‘Well, if you a’ n’t Joe, who are you? If you a’ n’t got a name, peg away; for blow me if I open till I hear it.’

There was a noise, as if the speaker, in conclusion of his observation, drew a chair or bench along the floor, and seated himself.

‘Come, Bill,’ said another voice, ‘this won’t do. You’d better open it.’

A muttering from Bill showed that he thought otherwise; but the person who had spoken, apparently not heeding his disapprobation, got up and opened the door, giving to Rust as he did so a full view of the interior of the room.

At a table sat a man with coarse red hair, and a beard of several days’ growth. He was a brawny fellow, six feet high, with a cast in one eye, which seemed to have been injured by a deep gash, the scar of which still remained, commencing on the very eyelid, crossing one cheek and his nose, and giving an air of sternness to features which needed not this addition to express much that was bad. His companion, who had opened the door, was a man of smaller build, with broad, square shoulders, dark, sharp eyes, narrow forehead and overhanging brows, and a thin, tremulous lip; and though possessed of less physical strength

than his comrade, looked much the more dangerous of the two.

They both eyed Rust without speaking, and then the larger of the two said to his comrade: 'Tim Craig, hand the gentleman a chair.'

'I do n't want one,' said Rust abruptly. 'Have you seen Enoch?'

They both shook their heads.

'He'll blow on me, and you, and others.'

The two men looked at him, and then at each other, but said nothing.

'He's set himself up against me — *me!*' said Rust, his thin lip curling and yet trembling as he spoke.

'He's a dark man, that Enoch,' said Craig, in a low tone. 'There's no good in crossing him, Mr. Rust.'

'Crossing him! crossing *him!*' exclaimed Rust. 'He has crossed *me*. Who ever did *that*, and prospered? Ho! ho! Enoch, Enoch! you mistook your man!'

The two looked anxiously at each other, but did not speak; and although they had the thews and sinews which could have torn the thin form before them to shreds, it seemed as if they both shrank from him with something like fear.

'It has come to the death-struggle between us,' said Rust; 'one or the other must fall.'

'If you're the one?' inquired Craig.

'Others must go too,' replied Rust; 'they *must*.'

Craig gnawed his lip.

'If Enoch goes, he goes alone,' continued Rust. 'He must be out of my way; he knows too much.'

The men exchanged looks; but the larger of the two seemed to leave all the speaking to the other, merely listening with great attention, and occasionally favoring his com-

rade with a glance, to see what effect Rust's words produced on him.

'I have no time to stay now,' said Rust, turning to Craig: 'I've told you enough. Grosket is in my way. I must be rid of him.'

Craig put his finger to his throat, and deliberately drew it across it. 'You're a ticklish man to deal with, Mr. Rust: is that what you mean?' said he.

'I say I must be rid of him,' replied Rust fiercely. 'Are you deaf? Are your brains addled? Rid of him — *rid* of him — *rid* of him!' exclaimed he, advancing, and hissing the words in the man's ear, while there was something in his look and manner that caused even the bold villain he addressed to draw back and assume a somewhat defensive attitude. 'Do you understand me now? Law won't do what I want. I prescribe no mode; but Enoch Grosket must be out of my path.'

'You're growing red-hot, my master,' said the man, bluntly. 'But I must have what you want spoken out. Shall he be knocked on the head?'

'Has n't he committed a murder, burnt a house, stolen, embezzled? I think I've heard of his having done something of the kind,' said Rust, earnestly.

'Of course he has. He's done 'em all, if you like. Bill knows something about them. Do n't you, Bill?'

'Oh! yes,' said Bill, refreshing himself from a large pitcher of water. 'This 'ere vorter is very weak. Blowed if I a' n't forgot what liquor smells like; and it's so long since I seed a dollar, that bless me if I think I'd know one. I'd have to go to some obligin' friend to ax what it was.'

This declaration of ignorance was accompanied by a look of consummate disgust into the pitcher, and another of a very peculiar character at Rust.

That worthy, however, seemed not unused to meeting with gentlemen in similar trying circumstances ; for he gave both the look and language an interpretation which, considering the enigmatical mode in which they were expressed, fully met the views of the man who uttered them ; and thrusting his hand in his pocket, he drew out a handful of silver, which he flung into the pitcher, and said :

‘ Perhaps that will improve the water.’

Bill made no other response than a broad grin ; and then said, in a more business-like tone :

‘ Well, about that murder, and house-burnin’, and all that. What do you want ?’

‘ I want proof of it against Grosket, if he did it.’

‘ In course he did it,’ replied the man, with a knowing look.

‘ Well, bring me the proof of it, and bring it soon. You know where to find me.’

The smaller of the two men took Rust by the arm and led him to a remote part of the room, and then said, in a low tone : ‘ Suppose I can fetch some one here as would swear that Enoch had stole two children ; would that do ? It could be done.’

Rust stooped down hastily, as if to examine something on the floor ; and when he rose up, his face was paler than before.

‘ Ay ; find it all out,’ said he, hurriedly. ‘ All — all : who are the children ; who aided him : all — all.’

‘ I’ll do it,’ said the man.

‘ But remember this,’ said Rust, in a low, savage tone : ‘ if you breathe a word of this matter to mortal man, or about what you learn, it will lead to blood. Do you hear me ?’

‘ Yes, master ; and I believe you, too,’ replied the man, sullenly.

Rust turned on his heel, and even before they were aware that he had left the room, was in the street.

He flung his hand up toward the black sky, as he emerged, and exclaimed to himself:

‘Traitors! traitors! God of heaven, how I’m beset!’

His course was now to his old den. When he reached it, he found even that paragon of clerks, Mr. Kornicker, absent. This was a relief; for he was too much excited to care to have any witness of his appearance.

‘It struck seven as I passed the town-clock,’ said he. ‘It wants an hour to the time fixed. I’ll wait.’

Although it was dark, he flung himself on a chair, without striking a light, and sat for some time in silence, tapping the floor with his foot. But he could not rest in his present mood; and he soon started up and paced the room, muttering to himself. At last the clock struck eight. The lights which, shining from the windows in different parts of the building, had partially relieved the gloom of his room, were extinguished one by one, and it became pitchy dark. Rust lighted a candle; placed it on the mantel-piece, and stood looking at it for some moments. He heard a step on the stairs; but it ascended to the floor beyond, then descended, and went out into the street. He looked at his watch; it was but five minutes past eight. ‘God! how slow the time went!’ Perhaps his watch had stopped. He put it to his ear: tick, tick, tick! There seemed an interval of a minute between every stroke. ‘Five minutes past eight; ten minutes more, and *she* will be here,’ muttered he; ‘and then I shall know the worst.’

He put the watch in his pocket; and looking at the ceiling, attempted to whistle; but could not. His blood was in a fever. Hark!—was that a footstep on the stairs? No, it was only the tread of a person overhead. Hist!

what's that?' He stood stock-still, and listened. There was a slight shuffling noise in the passage, and then a faint tap at the door.

Rust sprang forward, and opened it. A female, muffled in an old cloak, stood cowering on the outside.

'Ha! it's you at last!' exclaimed he, in that abrupt, energetic manner, which suited his character better than his more usual tones. 'What news?'

The woman, either to gain time, or because she was really exhausted, staggered to a chair, and turning her face to the light, revealed the features of Mrs. Blossom.

'Ah's me! ah's me!' said she, leaning back, and sighing heavily. 'It's a wearisome way I've come, old and feeble as I am — old and feeble, old and feeble — a very wearisome way.'

There must have been something in the look of Rust, who stood before her with his black, glowing eye fixed on hers, that was peculiarly startling; for she paused in her whining, and turning to him, said:

'What do you look at me so for?'

'Is there no reason for it?' said Rust in a low voice. 'Is there no trust betrayed? Have you done all that you swore to do? Have you not betrayed me, I say?'

Mrs. Blossom, hardened as she naturally was, and as she had become by long following a pursuit which requires no little assurance, was not without some signs of trepidation at this question.

'No, no; I have n't. I swear I have n't,' said she.

Michael Rust grasped her wrist, and drawing her to the table, held the light full in her face.

'Who told Tim Craig about those children? Who told him what the man's name was who took them to you? Who told *you* *my* name?'

Mrs. Blossom shrank from the fierce, intense gaze which was fixed on her face. She attempted to reply, but no words followed the tremulous motion of her lips. And Rust went on :

‘I placed two children in your charge. They were never to leave it, except for one place — the grave.’

Mrs. Blossom’s wan features grew paler, as she whispered : ‘Not so loud, Mr. Rust ; not so loud.’

‘As you please ; I’ll whisper,’ said Rust, suiting the action to the word ; and speaking in a whisper, yet so distinct and thrilling, that each word seemed to come like a blow. ‘I placed two children under your charge ; and unless I required them, and unless they grew ill and died, they were to become what you are. Where are they ? I want them.’

Mrs. Blossom looked hopelessly about her, as if she meditated an escape ; but seeing no chance of any, she cast a deprecating eye at Rust, shook her head, and said nothing. Rust went on in the same strain :

‘They were with you two months since ; going on gloriously ; travelling at a hand-gallop to the grave. I have heard strange stories of them since. Are they true ?’

Still the woman was silent.

‘Answer me !’ said Rust, his fury gradually getting the mastery of him, and his voice bursting out loud and clear. ‘Where are they ?’

Mrs. Blossom clasped her hands and looked at him, but uttered not a word.

‘Where are the children ? Answer me !’ said he, starting to his feet, and darting up to her, his eyes perfectly blood-shot with fury, and the foam standing round his lips ; ‘the children, I say — *the children !* God d — n you ! — do you hear me ?’

Mrs. Blossom cowered down in the chair, and made one

or two futile efforts to speak; her thin blue lips quivered, but no sound came from them; while a kind of idiotic smile fixed itself on her features.

‘THE CHILDREN, I say!’ exclaimed Rust, gnashing his teeth with rage; and seizing the woman by the shoulders in his paroxysm of fury, he shook her until she reeled and fell to the floor. ‘What have you done with them? Answer me; or, by the God of heaven, I’ll crush you beneath my feet!’

Before his amiable intention, however, could be carried into effect, Mrs. Blossom had recovered her feet, and not a little of her usual spirit; and turning upon him, with eyes flashing as brightly as his own, she said:

‘They’re gone, Michael Rust; gone, *gone!* Do you hear that? Gone where, when you next see them, you will wish the undertaker had measured them before. Gone, gone! ha! ha! Would you know where? Ask Enoch Grosket for one, and he’ll tell you; and the other’s beyond your reach. You won’t see the lambs again. So much for striking an unprotected female, Michael Rust. That for ye! *that* for ye! *THAT* for ye!’ And she snapped her fingers in the face of the disappointed schemer, and left the room, slamming the door loudly after her.

Rust clasped his hands as she went out, and raised his eyes to heaven.

‘Gone!’ repeated he, in a low tone; ‘*gone!* — both gone! And I — I — what will become of me? Is it for *this* that I have toiled for years; that I have stooped to meanness and dissimulation; have steeped myself in crime, and have had felons and miscreants of every dye for my associates? For years have I been on the rack. No more quiet hours, or peaceful dreams; but cursed and hated; my schemes thwarted, my hopes blighted; a felon; my dearest

hopes crumbled to dust; Kate married! — and I, *I* — where shall I be? And *she* — she, whom I have loved above all others — what will become of her? God of heaven!’ exclaimed he, ‘shall these things be? *Shall* I fall? — shall *they* triumph? Never! never! Be yourself, Michael Rust!’ said he, in a choked voice; ‘be yourself! be yourself! This has happened from trusting others. Rely on yourself, Michael; be cool, Michael; and then thwart them — thwart them!’

He paused, and stood in the middle of that room like a statue. Slowly and by degrees every trace of excitement disappeared from his features, until they had assumed a sharp, rigid, fixed look; and then he said, pursuing the same theme: ‘Thwart them; *thwart* them, Michael Rust! Work, toil, cringe, lie, steal, murder — ay, do *any* thing — but thwart them, thwart them! Good Michael Rust, don’t suffer yourself to be a by-word in their mouths! And if you fail, Michael, die fighting. There’s something noble in *that*. Be it so; be it so!’ said he, in a stern, abrupt tone. ‘They’ve driven me to extremities. Nothing but desperate measures can save me. Desperate measures shall be tried. Does success require a life? Well, well; the world’s overloaded; it shall have one. If I attain it, it will be another’s; if I fail, it will be my own. The grave is a quiet resting-place; a better one than the world, when a man’s foiled in all his aims. But I’m weary, I’m weary!’ said he, in a low, desponding tone; ‘my head’s dizzy, and my brain confused, by the troubles which have come so thickly upon me to-day. I must rest.’

Drawing a chair to the table, he seated himself upon it; bent his head down upon the table, and, exhausted by the excitement of the last few days, which had taxed even his iron frame beyond its powers of endurance, he soon slept heavily.

CHAPTER XVI.

LEAVING Michael Rust buried in death-like slumber, we must turn to one destined to take an active part in the succeeding events of this history ; and who, on that same evening, was employed in a manner directly the reverse of that of Rust. That man was Harry Harson.

Seated at a table in his own room, with every feature puckered up into a very hard knot, the combined result of thought, perplexity, and anger, he was poring over a number of papers, occasionally pausing to scratch his head, or breaking out into an exclamation of displeasure, not unfrequently accompanied by a hard thump on the table, as something met his eye which excited his indignation in a peculiar degree.

It was past midnight ; three good hours beyond the time at which he usually retired to rest. All indications of bustle and stir in the streets had long since ceased, and not a sound was heard, except the occasional tread of a belated straggler, hurrying to his home ; the sharp ticking of the clock, and the plethoric snoring of Spite, who made it a rule never to go to bed before his master ; and who, being a methodical dog in habit, and an obstinate one in disposition, could not be induced to depart from old usages. As each successive hour was heralded by the voice of the clock just mentioned, Spite rose, looked at the timepiece, then at his master, as if to say, ‘Hallo ! old fellow, do you hear that ?’ gaped ; sauntered round the table, and resumed his former position, each time lessening the distance between himself and the fire, as its embers gradually crumbled to ashes. Still, Harson con-

tinued his occupation ; tossing over, examining, and studying the papers and letters, in utter disregard of hints and admonitions. Apparently, he became more troubled as he advanced in his investigation. His brow contracted ; the color deepened in his cheek ; his eye kindled ; and more than once he threw the papers impatiently on the table, and, rising up, paced the room with rapid strides. This occurred at intervals during the whole evening, until finally he came to a letter which caused his anger to boil over. Starting to his feet and clasping his hands, he exclaimed : ‘ Good God ! shall such things be ? and wilt Thou not protect the innocent and punish the guilty ? ’

‘ But why ask ? ’ added he, suddenly : ‘ I know that even now, through channels that were least dreamed of, justice is working its way to the light. Confirm me, great God ! ’ added he, fervently, ‘ in my purpose of seeing right done ; and grant that I may never swerve from my course until that purpose is accomplished ! ’

Had the culprit against whom he uttered this invocation and prayer heard the muttered threat which succeeded it, and witnessed the kindling face and stern, determined eye of the person who had uttered them, his heart, had he been a man of ordinary mould, might have sunk ; but as the culprit in this case was no other than Michael Rust, who had no belief in an hereafter ; who entertained suspicion against all men, and who never yielded his point under any circumstances, it is possible that it would have produced no other result than increased watchfulness, increased determination, and bitter hatred.

‘ I have read of such schemes as these,’ muttered Harson, ‘ but I never expected to have any thing to do with them myself — never. Can there be any doubt ? ’ said he, turning the letters over in his hand. ‘ They can scarcely be forgeries, vamped up to obtain money from me ; for many of them

were written years ago, and bear post-office stamps whose dates correspond with the dates within.

‘But,’ said he, looking at the clock, ‘enough of this. It would almost make a young man gray to wade through the details of such villany. An old man like me must spare himself. I’ve had enough for one dose; so I’ll sleep on it, and take the rest in the morning. Ha! Spite,’ said he, stooping down and patting the dog; ‘better be a good, honest dog like thee, my old cur, than a man with such a heart as some have. The temper’s a trifle, Spite; so do n’t be worried about yours; for your heart’s right, my old dog. There’s no double-dealing about you. I do n’t know whether God blesses an honest dog, or not; but I believe he does, in some way or other. Come, pup, I’ll not keep you up longer.’

Saying this, he gathered up the papers, and placed them in a small box, which he locked, and put under his arm, and, followed by Spite, left the room for the story above. He paused, and listened at a door at the head of the stairs; then turning the knob so as to make no noise, he went in. It was a small room, having a thick carpet on the floor, and a dressing-table covered with white muslin standing between the windows, whose curtains were as white as snow. In one corner was a bed. On a chair, at the side of it, lay a girl’s clothes; and in the bed itself was a girl of about five years of age, with her light hair streaming over the pillow like a web of gold. There was little trace in her face of the out-cast whom he had taken from the streets but a few weeks before; for the thin cheek had filled up, and the flush of health had succeeded the paleness of suffering and illness. Her eyes were closed, and their long lashes drooped over her cheek; but she did not sleep soundly; for she muttered to herself, as Harson bent over her: ‘Come, Charley; we’ve been looking for you a long time. Come!’

‘She’s dreaming of the boy,’ thought he; ‘but be of good heart, my poor child; we’ll find him yet.’

He leaned down until his gray hair mingled with her bright locks, pressed his lips to her forehead, and went quietly into the entry, where his presence was greeted with no little satisfaction by Spite, who had been shut out, and was becoming somewhat testy at being kept in the dark.

It was not long before Harson, with a thick counterpane up to his very chin, was sleeping as soundly in his own bed as Spite was under it.

What dreams hovered around the old man’s pillow, or whether he had any, we cannot tell; but certain it is, that when the morning sun broke through a small opening between the window-curtains, flinging a long, thin streak of gold across the carpet, Harson was still sound asleep; and it is quite uncertain how long he might have continued so, had not the same ray of sunshine, in its passage across the room, fallen directly across the centre of the right eye of Spite, who had been drifting about the apartment since daybreak; and who now vented his disapprobation of the liberty taken, in an irritable yelp.

Harry sat up in bed. ‘What ails thee, pup?’ said he, rubbing his eyes.

Spite, however, was not in a communicative mood; but walked to the door, and seating himself, surveyed the knob with great attention. Harson got up; threw on a dressing-gown, and going to the door, let him out, shutting it after him.

He then went to a basin as portly and capacious as himself, dashed nearly a pailful of water into it; bared head, neck, and shoulders, and plunged them in. Out he came, very red in the face, with water dripping from nose, and chin, and eyebrows. Then in again he went; and then

followed such a rubbing, and puffing, and blowing, and spouting, that he seemed like a young whale at his gambols. This ceremony being repeated some half dozen times, and the same number of towels having dried him, he proceeded to dress himself.

It might have been observed, however, that during the whole time, his thoughts were wandering; for he walked to the window with some article of apparel in his hand, and stood looking into the street, in a state of deep abstraction; and then, drawing a long breath, resumed his dressing with great earnestness, as if it had struck him that he was neglecting it. Then again he seated himself on the side of his bed, and sat for some minutes, looking on the floor.

‘It’s terrible, terrible!’ said he; ‘but it’s not too late to remedy it. Thank God for that!’

Putting on one thing after another, sometimes upside down, sometimes getting his feet in his sleeves; then thrusting an arm in the wrong side of his coat; tying and untying his huge cravat half a dozen times, and enveloping the half of his face in its ample folds; doing every thing wrong, and rectifying his mistakes with the greatest gravity, and without the slightest appearance of impatience, Harson finally found himself fully established in coat and jacket, with no other mistake than the trifling one of having buttoned the lower button of the last article into the top button-hole. Having duly surveyed himself in the glass, to see that all was right, without having detected his mistake, he went out.

He stopped at the door of the child’s room. His footsteps had apparently been recognized, for it was ajar, and a pair of bright eyes were peeping out to welcome him.

‘Annie, is that you? Ha! child, you’re a sad sleepy-head. You’ll lose your breakfast. This won’t do — this won’t do. Spite was up long ago.’ He shook his finger at the child,

who laughed in his face; and then, flinging the door open, showed herself fully dressed.

‘Wrong, Harry; wrong, wrong again,’ said she, springing out, and addressing him in the familiar manner that he always liked: ‘I am dressed.’

The old man took her in his arms, kissed her cheek, and carried her down stairs; and did not put her down till they were in the room below.

‘Come, Harry, there’s breakfast; and there’s your seat; and here’s mine,’ exclaimed she, leading him to the table. ‘Martha has got here before us,’ said she, shaking her head at a demure-looking woman of fifty, in a faded cap, with a rusty ribbon round it, who was already seated at the table, preparing the coffee. ‘Here, Spite — come here.’

Spite was not a dog given to the company of children. He was by far too old, and sedate, and dignified for that; but there were occasions on which he could unbend, and these fits of relaxation generally came over him just at meal-times, when he permitted the child not only to pat him, but even to uncurl his tail. Doubtless the sight of the creature-comforts which garnished Harry’s table had its effect in producing this change, although it is possible the knowledge that the child devoted full half of her time to supplying his wants (a thing which his master sometimes neglected) may have had its weight. Obedient, at any rate, to the summons, Spite hopped from a chair on which he had been seated, and placed himself at her side, watching every mouthful she swallowed, and licking his lips with great unction.

Harrison’s breakfast-table was, as the neighbors said, (particularly the poor ones who now and then chanced to drop in at it,) enough to awaken an appetite in a dead man; and if dead people are peculiarly alive to hot coffee, and mutton-chops, and hashed meats, and warm cakes, and fresh rolls

like snow itself, and all these things set off by crockery which shone and glittered till you could see your face in it, and table-linen without a speck or wrinkle in it, there is little doubt but that a vast number of departed individuals must have found their mouths watering at exactly half-past seven each morning; that being the precise hour at which these articles made their daily appearance on Harson's table. But certain it is that, whatever may have been its effect upon them, it had little upon Harson; for he scarcely touched any thing, nor did he bestow his usual attention on those about him, but sat sometimes with his eyes fixed on the cloth, sometimes staring full in the face of the old housekeeper, who looked at the ceiling, and on the floor, and in her cup, and coughed, and hemmed, and fidgeted, and grew so red, and confused, and embarrassed, that before Harson was even aware that he was looking at her, to use her own expression, 'she thought she should have dropped.' But this was only of a piece with all the rest of his actions during the morning; for to all remarks or questions, his only answer was an emphatic 'humph!' and it was not until he observed that the others had finished their meal, that he hastily drank off his coffee at a draught, and rose from the table.

'You need not remove the things now, Martha,' said he, as the rattling of the crockery announced that this process was commencing. 'The noise disturbs me. I wish to be alone for a short time; and after that you can do as you please.'

The housekeeper made no reply; but went out, taking the girl with her, and leaving Harry to his meditations.

That these were neither pleasant nor composing, was quite evident; for after walking up and down with his hands in his pockets, and muttering to himself, he finally stopped short, and apparently addressing Spite — for his eyes were

fixed upon him, and Spite returned the look, as if he supposed that he was being consulted — he broke out with :

‘What am I to do? This matter on my hands; and Ned, poor Ned, kicked adrift by the old man, and Kate breaking her little heart about *him*; and her father quietly led by the nose to the Devil. There’s no doubt about it; that fellow Rust’s at the bottom of it all; and no one except me to unravel this knot. God bless me! It bewilders my brain, and my old head spins. But, Annie, Annie, my poor little child! if I forsake thee, may I never prosper! How now, Spite?’

This exclamation was caused by a somewhat singular proceeding on the part of Spite, who, after looking at him as if deeply interested in the tenor of his remarks, suddenly uttered a sharp bark, and bolted from his chair as if shot from a gun. The cause of this movement was soon shown in the person of a man dressed in a very shabby suit of black, with a beard of several days’ growth, who stood just inside the door, and who, after a familiar nod to Harson, asked :

‘Are all the family deaf except the dog?’

‘When a man enters a stranger’s house, it is but proper to knock,’ said Harson, sharply.

‘Did you want your house battered about your ears?’ inquired the stranger; ‘for I *did* knock, until I was afraid it might come to that. Perhaps you’re deaf, old gentleman; if so, I’m sorry for you; but as for your d —— d dog, I wish he was dumb. I can scarcely hear myself speak for him.’

This explanation cleared from Harson’s face every trace of anger; and silencing the dog, he said: ‘I did not hear you; and yet I am not deaf.’

‘Well, I made noise enough,’ said the other. ‘Is your name Henry Harson?’

Harson answered in the affirmative.

The stranger took off his hat and placed it on a chair ; after which, he thrust his hand in his pocket and pulled out a letter. 'That's not it,' said he, throwing it in his hat ; 'nor *that*,' continued he, drawing out a handkerchief, which he rolled in a very tight ball, and transferred to another pocket.

'I've got a letter some where, *that* I know. It must belong to the mole family, for I put it uppermost, and it's burrowed to the very bottom ; d —— d if it has n't ! Ah, here it is,' said he, after a violent struggle, bringing up both a letter and a snuff-box. The former he handed to Harson, and the latter he opened, and after applying each nostril sideways to its contents, took a pinch between his fingers, returned the box to his pocket, and, seating himself, snuffed deliberately, all the while eyeing the breakfast-table with a fixed, steady, immovable stare.

The thread-bare, poverty-stricken look and hungry eye of his visitor was not lost on Harson, who, before opening the letter, glanced at the table and at the stranger, and then said : 'It's early ; perhaps you have not yet breakfasted, Mr. — Mr. — Mr ——'

'Kornicker,' said the stranger.

'Kornicker, Mr. Kornicker. If so, make yourself at home, and help yourself while I look over this letter ; no ceremony. I use none with you. Use none with me.'

It was a tempting sight to poor Kornicker ; for there stood the coffee-pot, steaming away at the spout ; and the dishes, far from empty, and such rolls as he was not in the habit of meeting every day ; but mingled with all his defects of character was a strong feeling of pride which made him hesitate ; and it is probable that pride would have carried the

day, had not Harson, divining something of his feeling, added :

‘Perhaps it’s scarcely civil to ask you to the table, when I have left it myself; but I should not stand on a trifle like that with you; and I hope you’ll not do so with me. Those rolls are excellent; try them.’

He said no more; but going to the window, broke the seal of the letter and commenced reading.

Left to himself, Kornicker struggled manfully; but hunger got the better of all other feelings; and at last, drawing his chair to the table, he commenced a formidable attack upon its contents.

‘So you’re with Michael Rust,’ said Harson, after he had finished reading the note, going to the table, and standing opposite Kornicker.

Kornicker’s teeth were just then engaged in a severe struggle with a roll, and he could do nothing but nod an affirmative.

‘Who is he?’ inquired Harson; ‘what’s his profession?’

Kornicker swallowed his roll, and kept it down by half a cup of coffee; and then said :

‘As to who he is, all I know is, he’s sometimes an old man; sometimes he is n’t; sometimes he wears a broad-brimmed hat and a red handkerchief on his head, and sometimes he do n’t; but who he is, or what he does, or where he goes to, or where he comes from, or whom he knows, or who knows him, curse me if *I* know. That’s all I can tell you, Sir. He’s a mystery, done up in the carcass of a little, dried-up man, of a d — d uncertain age. May I trouble you for the milk?’

‘Humph!’ said Harson, in a very dissatisfied tone, at the same time passing the milk; ‘and yet you are in his employ?’

Kornicker nodded.

‘It’s strange,’ muttered he, ‘quite strange.’

‘D —— d strange,’ said Kornicker, burying his face in a huge coffee-cup, ‘but true,’ continued he, setting it down.

‘True!’ repeated Harson; ‘true that you are in his employ; are in the habit of daily intercourse with him; attend to his concerns; see him constantly, and yet do not know who he is!’

‘Partly correct, partly incorrect,’ quoth Mr. Kornicker, pushing his cup away. ‘I’m in his employ — correct. I know nothing of him — correct again. As to the rest — incorrect. Sometimes, I do n’t see him for weeks; sometimes I have something to do — often nothing. I never know when he’s going, or when he’s coming back.’

Harson stood quiet for some time. ‘This is all very strange. Do n’t you know who are his acquaintances or associates?’

Kornicker shook his head.

‘Who comes to see him?’

‘No body.’

‘Do you never hear him speak of any one?’

‘Never heard him name a soul, till the other day he named Enoch Grosket, and to-day you.’

‘Do you know nothing of his mode of life, or intentions, or plans, or whether he’s honest or dishonest, or how he lives, or where his money comes from, or what his family is?’

‘Nothing,’ said Kornicker. ‘Indeed, it never struck me till now, how much there was to know on the subject, and how little conversant I was with it.’

‘Shall *I* tell *you* who he is?’ asked Harson.

Mr. Kornicker replied, that any information in his then unenlightened state would be acceptable.

‘Well, then, he’s one of the veriest villains that ever disgraced human nature. He’s——’

‘Come! come! none of that! hold up, old gentleman!’ interrupted Kornicker, sitting bolt upright, and grasping the handle of a coffee-cup with a somewhat hostile tenacity. ‘I’ve just been eating your bread, backed by not a little meat, and no small quantity of coffee, and therefore am under obligations to you; and of course, a quarrel with you would be greatly against my stomach. But you must recollect that Rust is my employer. What I eat, and drink, and snuff, comes out of his pocket; and although he was small in some matters, yet he helped me when it required a good deal of salt to save me; my fortunes were not only at an ebb, but they’d got to dead low-tide. I’m bound to stand up for him, and I’ll do it. I’ve no doubt he’s the d——dest rascal going; but I’ll not hear any one say so. If I do, damme. So no more of that. Come, come,’ said he, after a somewhat hostile survey of Harrison’s person; ‘you don’t look like the man to make a fellow regret that he’s broken your bread.’

Quizzical as was the look of Kornicker, and vagabond as he seemed, there was something in the open, blunt manner in which he defended even Rust, that found an answering note in the bosom of Harry; and he said:

‘No, no, I am *not*. You’re an honest fellow; but I suppose there’s no harm whatever in wishing you a better employer?’

‘No, none at all,’ said Kornicker, after a minute’s reflection; ‘I often wish *that* myself; but,’ said he, with a philosophical shake of the head, ‘some people are born with a silver spoon in their mouth, and I was n’t one of them; mine must have been iron; and I’m rather inclined to think that there must have been no bowl to it, for it always held mighty little.’

There was a mixture of comicality and sadness in the tone in which he spoke, which left Harson in doubt in what strain to answer him. At last he drew a chair to the table: leaning his two arms upon the back of it, and surveying his guest attentively, he asked: 'What's your business, if I may be so bold?'

'Law,' replied Kornicker, leaning back. 'I'm the champion of the distressed; see widows and orphans righted, and all that sort of thing. It's a great business—devilish great business.'

'And is Michael Rust a lawyer?' inquired Harson.

'No, I attend to that part of his concerns. He's a mere child in matters of that kind; but devilishly wide awake in others. But come, old gentleman,' said he, suddenly breaking off, 'I'm to thank you for a breakfast; now let's have an answer to the letter. It's time to be off.'

Harson glanced at the letter, and then said:

'Do you know the contents of this?'

'Not a word of them,' replied Kornicker.

'Nor what it's about?'

'No. Rust is neither confidential nor communicative,' replied Kornicker. 'So, what you've got to say, say in writing. I don't want the trouble of thinking about it, or trying to recollect it.'

'Humph!' said Harson. 'There's nothing here requiring a great stretch of either. He wants me to meet him at his office, on very particular business; a request somewhat singular, as I never laid eyes on him in my life.'

'Quite singular,' ejaculated Kornicker.

'But I *know* much about him; and *that* leaves me no desire to be more intimate with him. What do you think of it?'

'I think you're in luck,' replied the other; 'you're the

first that ever was asked inside the door since I've been there. Several very nice, pleasant fellows of my acquaintance have dropped in occasionally; and although his office is nothing to brag of, d — n me if he did n't invite them to air themselves in the street, and not to come back! It was quite mortifying, especially as I was there at the time.'

'What did you do?' inquired Harson.

'You've never seen Rust, you say?' said Kornicker, in reply to the previous question.

Harson answered in the negative.

'Well, Sir, if you *had*, you would n't ask that question. I looked out of the window, and held my jaw — that's what I did; and that's what I'd advise *you* to do in the same trying circumstances. But come, Sir, give me the answer.'

Harson, after a moment's thought, said: 'It is n't worth while to write. Tell him I'll come, or send some one. You can remember that?'

Kornicker replied that he thought he could; and taking up his hat, and shaking hands with Harson, and favoring Spite, who was examining the quality of the leg of his pantaloons, with a sly kick, he went out.

CHAPTER XVII.

‘COME, Spite,’ said Harson, when his visitor was gone, ‘we must be up and doing. This is not a business that can be trifled with. The longer we put it off, the tighter will the knot be drawn. Stop until I get the papers.’ Leaving the room for a moment, he returned fully equipped for walking; with a huge handkerchief wrapped round his chin, and his broad-brimmed beaver pulled tightly down over his forehead. ‘Now my cane, Spite, and we’ll see if we can’t get to the bottom of this deviltry. We’re embarked in a good cause, my old pup, and mustn’t give up. It’s a glorious day; the air’s bracing, and will make your old bones quite young again. Hey! what spirits you’re in!’ said he, as Spite, elated at being associated in so important a matter, after wriggling his body in a most convulsive manner, by way of expressing his satisfaction, finally fell over on his back, in an abortive effort to perform a hilarious pirouette on his hind legs. ‘Never mind, old fellow,’ said Harson; ‘pick yourself up; accidents will happen to the best of us. I warrant me you’d have done it better ten years ago; don’t be down-hearted about it. We’re going to see old Holmes; and when you and I and old Holmes are thoroughly at work in sifting this matter, why, Rust had better look sharp. Hey, Spite?’

Thus talking to his dog, or whistling to himself, or exchanging a cheery word with an acquaintance as he passed, the old man trudged along, followed at a very staid pace by his dog, who, since his late unsuccessful effort, had fallen into a very serious mood, notwithstanding all the

efforts of his master to raise his spirits and to banish the recollection of it from his mind.

The person whom Harrison sought was a little antiquated man, who had buried himself among his books, and spent his time in burrowing in out-of-the-way corners of the law. He had wormed his way into all its obsolete nooks, and haunted those regions of it which had become deserted, and as it were grass-grown from long disuse. By degrees he had shrunk from a practice which had once promised to be large; and a name which had once bid fair to shine brightly in the annals of the law, gradually grew faint in memory, as its owner was missed from those places where the constant rush of the crowd soon wears out any impress made by those who are no longer seen. But there were times when the old man looked out from his den, and prowled among those who had crowded in his place; and there were times (but those were on rare occasions, when some exciting case would be on the carpet) when he would steal into the court-room, with a bundle of papers under his arm; and would take his seat at the table among the counsel engaged in the case; sitting silent throughout the whole; speaking to none; taking no notes; watching the witnesses with his dim eyes; studying the faces of the jury; occasionally referred to by the other counsel; but taking no part in any discussion, until the evidence was closed, and the cause was to be summed up; and then, to the surprise of all, except the bench and a few of the oldest of the bar, rising to address the jury; commencing in a low, feeble tone, and apparently sinking with infirmity, until by degrees his dim eye became like fire; his faint voice like the clear ringing of a bell; his eloquence as burning as if flowing from the lips of manhood's prime; his sarcasm withering; his logic strong, clear, fervid, and direct; no loitering, no circumlo-

cution, no repetition : what he had to say he said *once*, and only once. Those who missed it then waited in vain for something of the same nature to explain it ; it never came. His object was before him, and he hurried onward to it, sweeping every thing before him and carrying all with him. And when he had concluded, as he gathered his papers and left the court, the elder members of the bar would say to each other : ' Old Holmes is himself again ; ' and the younger ones wondered who he was ; and as they learned his name, remembered dimly of having heard it as that of one who had lived in by-gone days.

His office was not in the business part of the town ; but in a quiet, shady street, which few frequented, filled with huge trees, and so quiet and out of the way that it seemed like a church-yard. Thither Harrison bent his steps ; and it was not long before he found himself in his office.

It was a large, dim room, with high shelves filled with volumes and papers, reaching to the low ceiling. Long, dusty cobwebs hung trailing from the walls : the very spiders who had formed them, finding that they caught nothing, had abandoned them. The floor was thickly carpeted ; and a few chairs were scattered about, with odd volumes lying upon them. Upon a table covered with a green cloth were piles of loose papers, ends of old pens, torn scraps of paper, and straggling bits of red tape. Altogether, it was a sombre-looking place, so still and gloomy, and with such a chilly, forbidding air, that it seemed not unlike one of those mysterious chambers which used to abound in antiquated castles and tumbling-down old houses, with a ghost-story hanging to their skirts ; or which some ill-natured fairy had doomed to be shut up for a hundred years : and the little, thin, dried-up man who sat in the far corner of it, with every faculty buried in the large volume on his knees,

looked as though he might have dwelt there for the whole of that period. Had it been so, it would have been the same to him ; for in that dim room had he spent the most of his life, immersed in the musty volumes about him ; now and then coming to the surface, to see that the world had not disappeared while he was busy ; and then diving again to follow out some dark under-current, which was to lead him, God knows whither. What was the world to him ? What cared he for its schemes and dreams and turmoil ? The law was every thing to him ; home, family, and friends. God help him ! a poor lone man, with kindly feelings and a warm, open heart, which might have made a fireside happy ; but now without a soul to whom he might claim kindred. Many respected him ; some pitied him, and a few, a very few, loved him. There he sat day after day, and often until the day ran into night, delving, and diving, and pondering, and thinking ; a living machine, working like a slave for his clients ; alike for rich and poor, the powerful and the friendless ; beyond a bribe ; too honest to fear or care for public opinion ; strenuous in asserting the rights of others, and never enforcing his own, lest he might give pain to another. God help him ! I say. He was not the man for this striving, struggling world ; and perhaps it was well for him that in his murky pursuits he found that contentment which many others wanted. Yet he never freed his mind from its trammels, and looked abroad upon the wide world, with its myriads of throbbing hearts, but he found in it those whom he could love and could help. God help *him*, did I say ? Rather, God help those who warp and twist the abilities, talents, and wealth which are showered upon them, to unholy purposes ; who make the former the slaves to minister to deeds and passions at which human nature might blush ; and the last but the stepping-stone to selfish aggrandizement,

or the nucleus around which to gather greater store. Pity *them*, but not *him*; for although but a pale, thin, sickly being, with barely a hold upon life, with scarce the strength of a child, growing old, and withered, and feeble without knowing it; yet was he all-powerful, from the bright, bold spirit that animated him, and a soul stern in its own integrity, which shrank from nothing except evil; and blessed was he, far above all earthly blessings, with a heart ever warm, ever open, and in which God had infused a noble share of his own benevolence and love to man.

It is no wonder then that Harry Harrison, when he stood in the presence of one in heart so akin to himself, paused and gazed upon him with a softened eye.

‘Holmes, Dick Holmes,’ said he, after a moment, ‘are you at leisure?’

The old lawyer started, looked wistfully up, contracting his dim eyes so as to distinguish the features of the person who addressed him, and then doubling down the leaf of the book which he had been reading, rose and advanced hesitatingly until he recognized him.

‘Ah, Harrison!’ said he, extending his hand quietly; ‘honest old Harry, as we used to call you,’ continued he, smiling; ‘I’m glad to see you. Few except those who come on business cross my threshold; so *you* are the more welcome. Sit down.’

He pushed a chair toward him, and drawing another close to it, took a seat, and looked earnestly in his face. ‘Time doesn’t tell on you, Harry; nor on me *much*,’ said he, looking at his attenuated fingers; ‘still it *does* tell. My flesh is not so firm and hard as it used to be; and I’m getting thinner. I’ve thought for some months past of relaxing a little, and of stealing off for a day to the country, and of rambling in its woods and fields, and breathing its

pure air. It would quite build me up; perhaps you'll go with me?'

'That I will, with all my heart,' said Harson; '*that* I will; and right glad am I to hear you say so; for it's enough to break down a frame of iron to spend hour after hour in this stagnant room, poring over these musty books.'

Holmes looked about the room, and at his volumes, and then said, in a somewhat deprecating tone :

'I've been very happy here. It does not seem gloomy to me; at least, not *very* gloomy. But come; I'll walk out with you now. It does me good sometimes to see what is going on out of doors; if I can only find a person I care for, to keep me company.'

He half rose as he spoke; but Harson placed his hand on his arm, and told him to keep his seat.

'You made a mistake this time,' said he, in a good-natured tone, and beginning to fumble in his pockets; 'business brought me here to-day; business, and a desire to follow the suggestions of a clearer head than mine.'

As he spoke, he drew from his pocket the package of letters, and placed it before the lawyer.

'Before you examine these, I must tell you what they are about. Perhaps you won't believe me, but these letters will confirm every word I say. You must hear my story, read them, and then tell me frankly and fairly what to do; not only as a lawyer, but as a friend. I shall need your advice as both.'

'You shall have it,' said Holmes; 'go on.'

The tale which Harson told was sufficient to arouse every feeling of indignation in the lawyer. As Harson went on, Holmes became excited, until, unable to control himself, he rose from his chair and paced the room, with every honest and upright feeling in arms. He forgot every thing but the

deep wrongs which were recited. Debility and age were trampled under foot; and his voice, clear and loud, rang through the room, scorching in its denunciation of the wrong-doer, and bitter in its threats of retribution. Then it was that the spirit showed its mastery over the clay, and, spurning the feeble form which clogged it, shone forth, strong in its own might, a glorious type of the lofty source from which it sprang. But suddenly he sat down; and passing his hand across his face, said in a feeble tone: 'I am easily excited now-a-days, but I will command myself. Go on; I will not interrupt you again.'

As he spoke, he placed his arms on the table, and leaned his head upon them; and this position he maintained without asking a question or making a comment, until Harson had finished speaking; and when he looked up, his face had assumed its usual quiet expression.

'Do these letters prove what you say, beyond a doubt?' he asked.

'I think so.'

'And why do you suppose them to be written by Rust? The name, you say, is different.'

'I had it from a person who would swear to it. By the way,' added he, suddenly, 'I have just received a letter from Rust. I'll compare the writing with those; that will prove it.'

He took the letter from his pocket, and placed it beside the others; and his countenance fell. They were as unlike as possible.

Holmes shook his head. 'You may have hit upon the wrong man; or you may have been purposely put on a false scent. There certainly is no resemblance between these,' said he, carefully comparing the two; 'not even in the general character of the hand.'

Harson could not but admit the fact. It was too evident.

‘Look over the whole bundle,’ said he. ‘There are at least twenty of them. If this is a disguised hand, it is possible that he may have betrayed himself in some of the others.’

The lawyer went over the letters, one by one, carefully comparing them; but still the character was the same. All of them were in the free, flowing style of a good penman; while the letter which Harson had produced was written in a bold, but stiff and ungraceful hand.

‘Where did you get this?’ said Holmes, pointing to the one which Harson had received from Kornicker.

‘It was brought to me by a clerk of his this morning.’

‘Then you know him?’ said Holmes.

‘I never saw him in my life.’

‘Have you ever had any business with him through others?’

Harson shook his head. ‘Never.’

‘How do you know that the person who brought this letter was from Rust?’ inquired he.

‘The letter proposes an interview. If it is n’t from him, the cheat would be found out when I go.’

‘How long have you been ferreting out this matter?’

‘Several weeks.’

‘Have you worked in secret, or openly?’ inquired Holmes.

‘I kept the matter as quiet as I could,’ replied Harson, ‘because I did n’t want him to get wind of it, and place obstacles in my way; but still, I was obliged to employ several persons of whom I know little.’

‘Then this Rust is the man, you may rely on it,’ said Holmes, in a positive manner. ‘He has discovered that you are busy, and is startled at it. Depend on it, this wish

to see you has something to do with your present movements.'

'I thought so too,' said Harson, 'and shall go there this morning.'

'I'll go too,' said Holmes; 'and the sooner we start, the better.'

'Thank you, thank you,' said Harson, stretching out his hand; 'the very thing I wanted.'

The old lawyer said no more; but after searching about his room for his hat and great-coat, and having succeeded, without any great difficulty, in putting on the last, (for he had no idea how shrunken and attenuated he was, and it was large enough for a man of double his size,) and supported by Harry's steady arm, they set out.

'Stop a minute,' said Harson; 'we've shut Spite in. There'll be the deuce to pay if we leave *him*. Come, pup.' He opened the door; and Spite having leisurely obeyed his call, they resumed their walk.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MICHAEL RUST sat in his office with his arms twined round his knees, and his chin bowed down to them, like a wild beast crouching to spring. His thin cheek was thinner than on the day before; his hair tangled and matted. But he neither moved nor changed his position; and the black flashing eye, which darted hither and thither, never resting, even for a moment, alone showed that his mind was on the alert.

He was awaiting the return of his messenger. Persons ascended and descended the stairs; and as the morning advanced, and the hours of business approached, the sound of out-door bustle increased, until a perfect current of human beings seemed to pour through the street. Still, Rust sat there in silence, watching the return of his clerk. Once, he fancied that he distinguished his voice in the entry. He got up, opened the door, and looked out; a strange man was loitering in the passage, but no one else. He shut it, dragged a chair to the middle of the room, stamped it down heavily, and flung himself into it. A step slowly ascended the stairs. He was certain this time. It was Kornicker. There was no mistaking that heavy, irregular tread; but, nevertheless, Rust did not stir until the door opened and Kornicker walked in.

‘Your answer!’ said Rust, looking at him, as if to read his success in his features.

‘He’ll come.’

‘When?’

'He didn't say,' replied his clerk, shutting the door by butting his shoulder against it.

'Did he write?'

'No.'

'Good!' replied Rust, abruptly. 'Any thing else?'

'No. If you've done with me, I'll get my breakfast.'

'Go.'

Kornicker departed, and Rust relapsed into his old attitude, occasionally biting his nails, or passing his fingers through his matted hair, or casting a suspicious glance toward the door.

Half an hour had passed, and Rust was absorbed in his own thoughts, when he was startled by a heavy step at his door. He sat up in his chair, and listened attentively, holding his breath. There was something in that step which he did not like. It was calm, slow, and deliberate. He hoped that it would pass on, but it did not. Two hard knocks at the door followed.

'Come in,' said Rust, without rising.

The door opened, and Harson and Holmes entered. Still Rust sat where he was, with his black eyes peering from beneath his heavy brows, and glancing from face to face.

'I'm seeking a Mr. Rust,' said Harson, advancing.

'That's me. My name is Rust,' was the laconic answer.

'And mine is Harson,' replied the other. 'I received this note this morning,' said he, pointing to the letter which he had received from Kornicker, 'and have come to keep the appointment proposed in it.'

Rust moved uneasily on his chair, and turned to the lawyer; but, seeing that no farther efforts at opening a conversation were made by his visitors, he pointed to Holmes, and asked:

'Is that gentleman's name Henry Harson too?'

‘No,’ replied Harson.

‘Then he was n’t invited here. My note was to Henry Harson, and to no one else. My conversation is to be on private matters, which I don’t choose to make known to every body.’

‘Perhaps it is as well that I should go,’ said Holmes, without any trace of anger. ‘I’ll leave you, Harry, and will return in half an hour.’

He was leaving the room, when Harson laid his hand on his arm, and said :

‘No, no ; don’t go, Dick ; I can’t spare you.’ Turning to Rust, he added : ‘There are no secrets between this man and me, and I don’t intend that there shall be. So, what you have to say, you must speak out before us both, or keep it to yourself.’

Rust eyed him for a few moments in silence, with his thin lips closely compressed, and then looked on the floor, apparently making up his mind. At length he said, in a slow tone : ‘So you *will* have him here, will you ? Well, be it so. Should what I say hit hard, thank yourself that one more knows it than is necessary !’

He went to the table and took up a letter, which he handed to Harson. ‘Did you write that ?’

Harson opened it, and ran his eye over it. ‘I did,’ said he. ‘How came *you* by it ?’

‘No matter. You’ll find that out some day ; but not now. I may have borrowed it, I may have found it, or bought it, or begged it, or stolen it. Michael Rust, you know, is not too good to do any thing. I think you hinted something of the kind in it.’

Harson passed the letter to Holmes, who, seating himself, deliberately perused it, and turned it over, and examined the ~~back~~ back, with a kind of habitual caution. There was a smile

upon his lips as he read it, that puzzled Rust. 'It's not at all improbable that he *may* have stolen it,' said he, folding it up, and returning it to Harson. 'The language is free, but no doubt it is deserved.'

Rust's eyes fairly shot fire, as they encountered the calm, steady gaze of the old lawyer. But he could not look him down, and he turned away and said :

'I'm not fond of law, or there is that in that letter which, if revenged in a court of justice, would fall heavily upon the writer of it.'

'Perhaps so, perhaps so,' said Holmes, in reply.

'Well, Sir, I'll not waste time about this matter, but will state why I sent for you ; which was, not to ask favors, but to warn you against the consequence of your own acts. For weeks, a man whose gray hairs might have brought prudence with them, has been at work in the dark, tracking my footsteps, prying into my actions ; throwing out insinuations against me ; asserting nothing openly, but doing every thing in secret ; working with the vilest tools, and frequenting the haunts of the very offscouring of the earth. It was a noble pursuit,' said he, bitterly, 'and it was worthy of the person upon whom I was at last able to fix it. That person was *you*,' said he, pointing to Harson. 'Stop, Sir !' said he, seeing that Harson was going to speak, 'stop, Sir. Your turn will come. Hear what *I* yet have to say. I have told you what you have done ; I have told you too that I hated law ; but if you think that I am a man who will submit to be hunted down like a beast, and branded in the eyes of the world, with impunity, you don't know Michael Rust.'

Harson's fingers had gradually closed, until his fist assumed a form not unlike the head of a sledge-hammer ; and for a short time it was a matter of no small doubt whether it would not light upon the sharp, fierce face that glared

upon him. But a cautioning glance from Holmes called him to himself; and he replied in a manner which, if less to the point, was at least more peaceable: 'What I *have* done, I will abide by; what I *intend* to do, you'll find out, and that soon. Take your own course, and I'll take mine. If you are innocent, you'll not be injured; if you are not, you'll get your deserts.'

Rust bit his lips at this quiet answer. 'Perhaps,' said he, in a low, sneering tone, 'since you seem to be so anxious to pry into my conduct, you may obtain more authentic information by applying to me in person; and perhaps you will not object to make my misdeeds, of which you hint so freely, known to *me*, who certainly am interested in learning what they are.'

Harrison drew Holmes to the other end of the room, where they whispered together for some moments; after which, Holmes turned to Rust, and said:

'Your name, I think, is Michael Rust?'

'That is my name,' replied Rust, bowing stiffly.

'And you accuse Mr. Harrison of having endeavored to injure your character?'

'I do,' replied Rust.

'Perhaps your memory may lead you astray, and his remarks and allusions may refer to another than yourself.'

Michael Rust turned from him with a contemptuous smile; and then tapping the letter with his finger, said: 'Ink never forgets. Henry Harrison and his friend may both vary their story, but this is always the same, and the slanders once uttered against me *here*, are here still unchanged and unsoftened.'

'Against *you*?' repeated Holmes. 'Read it again. *You* are not even mentioned in it.'

Rust glanced at it; and the lawyer thought that for a

moment he observed a change in his features. If so, it was but momentary; for he answered in the same low tone, though perhaps with even more of a sneer:

‘It was a trap, was it? Pah! a child could see through it! It alludes to one *Henry Colton*. The charges are made against *him*. I’ll save you the trouble of farther manœuvring to obtain information on that point, by informing you that Henry Colton and Michael Rust are one. I’ll inform you too that you knew it before you came here. If you wish it, I’ll give you the same admission in writing.’

‘I accept your offer,’ said Holmes, quietly. ‘There’s paper,’ said he, pointing to the table; ‘write it on that.’

Rust cast an angry glance at him, and seemed to hesitate but he saw that he was watched narrowly, and must not shrink. So he sat down and scrawled something, which he pushed to Holmes.

Holmes read it over slowly: ‘Alter *that*; the wording is not clear,’ said he, pointing out a paragraph which did not suit him.

Rust took up the pen and altered the phrase.

‘Perhaps *that* will do?’ said he, again handing it to Holmes.

‘That’s just what I want,’ replied the lawyer, running his eye over it, and apparently weighing every word. ‘But you are very forgetful. You have n’t signed it.’

Rust took the paper and signed his name to it. ‘I hope you are satisfied. I suppose you have me now,’ said he, with a sneer.

‘I think I *have*,’ replied Holmes, folding up the paper, and putting it in his pocket. ‘Have you any farther remarks to make to Mr. Harrison or myself? What you have done has been of much service, and will save us a great deal of trouble.’

‘None,’ replied Rust; ‘I sent for *him*,’ said he, pointing to Harson, ‘to let him know that I was aware of his proceedings, and to warn him that I was prepared to defend myself; and that if he persisted in his attacks upon me, he would do so at his peril.’

‘It is well,’ said Holmes. ‘It’s frank in you, and no doubt Mr. Harson feels grateful. And now that you have finished, perhaps you will listen to a strange tale which I am going to narrate to you. I wish you to pay particular attention, as you may find it interesting. It’s quite romantic, but strictly true.’

‘Once upon a time, (that’s the way stories begin, I think,) there were two brothers living at a place far from this city, the names of whom were George and Henry Colton. The former received a large property from a distant relative, while the means of the latter were limited; so much so, that but for the liberality of his elder brother, he would have found it utterly impossible to live in the style and manner in which he always did and still is accustomed to live.’

‘Well, Sir, does this refer to me?’ said Rust; ‘and if it does, and is true, what then?’

‘I have not finished,’ replied Holmes. ‘You shall hear the rest. Shortly after the accession of George Colton to this property, he married; but previous to doing so, to secure his brother against want, he settled upon him property sufficient to produce him a handsome income.’

‘Well, Sir,’ said Rust, ‘what then?’

‘You shall hear,’ replied Holmes. ‘By this marriage George Colton had two children, who in the course of law would have inherited his entire property, had they been living at the time of his death. These children had reached the ages of two or three years, when they were lost in a very singular manner. They had been left alone by their nurse,

in a room in their father's house; and when she returned, after the lapse of a very few minutes, they were gone; and from that day to this their parents have had no tidings of them. Search was made in every direction; rewards were offered; persons were employed in all parts of the country, and descriptions of the missing children were placarded in every quarter. No one was more earnest and untiring in his efforts to find them than Henry Colton, the younger brother; for he remembered only his brother's past kindness; entirely forgetting, that if these children were dead, he would, in all probability, receive his brother's vast property. But he was equally unsuccessful with the others. By degrees, hope grew fainter, and the efforts of all, except this noble younger brother, relaxed; but he travelled, wrote, had agents employed in every direction, and, I am told, is still endeavoring to unravel this mystery. And now,' said he, in a low, stern tone, 'shall I tell you the reason why he failed? It was this: The agents employed by him were put on a false scent; and although a high reward was offered for the discovery of the children, a higher one was paid for keeping the place of their concealment secret. Shall I tell you,' added the lawyer, in the same tone, 'who paid the bribe? That same noble Henry Colton, the younger brother; and what's more, that same man sometimes bore the name of Michael Rust. All this can be proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, and will be, in a court of justice, if we are compelled to do it.'

The lawyer paused, and looked Rust steadily in the face.

'Well, Sir,' said Rust, 'part of what you say is true. I know that the children were lost; I know that I did what I could to find them. As to the rest, it is false, and I care nothing for it. They are dead, I fear.'

'Not quite,' replied Holmes. 'One of them is already

rescued ; so that Michael Rust's hopes and schemes are thwarted ; and his only chance to escape the arm of the law is to give up the other, or to tell where he is.'

Rust turned toward him, and looking him steadily in the face, said : ' Well, Sir, if this be true, I'm glad of it ; but if some designing scoundrel is desirous of palming off his own brats on an honest man, to swindle him out of his property, let him beware, lest he run his legs into shackles. For my part, I've no doubt that the whole tale is a fabrication of that old man's,' said he, pointing to Harson, ' got up for no honest purpose.'

' That's false !' replied Holmes, sternly. ' Lie as you will ; deny as stoutly as you please ; I tell you that what I have said is true, and that you know it to be so.'

Rust grew deadly pale, but said nothing.

' And I tell you again,' said Holmes, in the same stern voice, ' that your only hope of escaping punishment is in giving up the remaining child, or in giving such information as may lead to his discovery. Do that, and we will show you all the favor we can.'

' Nay, more,' added Harson ; ' we will never let it be known what you had to do with it. We'll let it be supposed that the children were stolen, and found. We will keep it quiet, won't we, Ned ?' said he, walking up to the lawyer, and laying his hand on his shoulder.

' You've said so, and your promise must be kept,' replied Holmes. ' I should n't have made it. But you must decide at once.'

Michael Rust had sat as still as a statue, merely turning his eyes from one to the other, as they spoke.

' Have you done ?' asked he, in a voice as quiet and composed as if the threats just uttered had no reference to himself.

‘You have heard all that we have to offer,’ said Holmes.

‘You’re very kind,’ replied Rust; ‘you’re *very* kind; but you don’t *know* Michael Rust. He accepts favors from no man. There, there — go! He values your threats and promises alike; and neither the one nor the other will turn him one inch from his own course, to aid you in your dishonest purpose of passing off your own brats as the lost children of George Colton. He can’t lend himself to such an iniquitous scheme — it’s against his conscience. Good-morning. Our interview is ended, I think. I’m sorry to see gray hairs so steeped in depravity.’

‘Michael Rust,’ said Holmes, turning to him, ‘you have sealed your own doom. I’m glad you’ve rejected our offers, and I now withdraw them. You’re unworthy of them; and you shall have no other grace than that what the law extends to a felon.’

Rust bowed. ‘You’re kind. I shall not trouble you to repeat the offer. As for the grace extended to felons, I believe there is a law which makes a conspiracy to defraud a felony likewise. It takes three to make a conspiracy, in law; but I have no doubt you have abettors. Perhaps you had better examine the matter. I wish you good-morning, gentlemen; I wish to be alone.’

Rust sat without moving, until the sound of their footsteps descending the stairs was lost, and then he sprang to his feet.

‘Now, then,’ exclaimed he, ‘I know where I am! Now I can see where to strike. Ha! ha! We’ll see who conquers, Harry Harson or Michael Rust — a desperate man, who has no alternative but to succeed or die. I know where the mine is to be sprung; and I will countermine!’

Listless, desponding, and irresolute as to his course, as he had been before his interview with Harson, all trace of irresolution had disappeared now. He had decided upon the steps

to be taken; and, desperate as they were, he was not the man to hesitate. The anxiety which had borne him down disappeared as he ascertained the extent of his danger, and was able to nerve himself to cope with it; and his manner was not only cheerful but merry, and his eye shone with a self-confidence not unlike that of a gladiator preparing for a conflict in which he or his adversary must perish.

Lingering in his office only long enough to give his visitors time to get some distance off, he put on his hat, locked the door, placed the key over it, so that Kornicker might know where to find it, and sallied out into the street.

CHAPTER XIX.

NOTWITHSTANDING his having made what most persons would have considered a hearty meal at Harry Harrison's, Mr. Kornicker had nevertheless such perfect reliance on his own peculiar gastronomic abilities, that he did not in the least shrink from again testing them. Leaving Michael Rust's presence with an alacrity which bordered upon haste, he descended into the refectory with somewhat of a jaunty air, humming a tune, and keeping time to it by an occasional flourish of the fingers. Having seated himself, he closed his eyes; thrust his feet at full length under the table; plunged both hands to the very bottom of his pockets, where they grasped spasmodically two cents and a small key, and laughed silently for more than a minute.

'A queer dog! a very queer dog! d——d queer, old Michael is! Well, that's *his* business, not mine.'

Having thus expressed his opinion, he sat up, became grave, and looked about in search of the waiter. In doing so, his eyes encountered those of a short fat man at a table near him, who at the first glance seemed to be reading a newspaper, but at the second, seemed to be reconnoitering him over it. Mr. Kornicker, observing this, not only returned his glance, but added a wink to it by way of interest. The man thereupon laid down his paper, and nodded.

Mr. Kornicker nodded in reply; and said he hoped he was well, and that his wife and small children were equally fortunate.

The face of the stranger was a round, jolly face, with two little eyes that twinkled and glistened between their fat lids, as if they were very devils for fun; and his whole appearance was cosy and comfortable. His chin was double; his stomach round and plump, with an air of respectability; and he occasionally passed his hand over it, as if to say: 'Ah ha! beat that if you can!' But notwithstanding his merry look, at Mr. Kornicker's last remark his face grew long; and with a melancholy shake of his head, he pointed to his hat, which hung on a peg above him, and was swathed in a broad band of crape, terminating in two stiff skirts projecting from it like a rudder, and giving it the appearance of a corpulent butterfly in mourning, at roost on the wall.

'Ah!' said Mr. Kornicker, looking at the hat, 'that's it?'

'Yes,' replied the stranger, with a deep sigh, 'that's it.'

'Father?' inquired Mr. Kornicker, nodding significantly toward the hat.

'No — wife,' replied the other.

'Dead?' inquired Mr. Kornicker.

'Dead as a hammer.'

'Was it long or short? consumption or fits?' asked Mr. Kornicker, drawing up his feet, and turning so as to face the stranger, by way of evincing the interest which he felt in his melancholy situation.

The man shook his head, and was so affected that he was troubled with a temporary cold in his head; which having alleviated by the aid of his handkerchief, he said: 'Poor woman, she undertook to present me with a fine boy, last week, and it proved too much for her. It exhausted her animal nature', and she decamped on a sudden. She was a very fine woman — a very fine woman. I always *said* she was.'

‘And the child?’ inquired Kornicker, ‘I hope it’s well.’

‘Quite well, I thank you. It went along with her. They are both better off: saints in heaven, both of ’em; out of this wale of tears.’

Mr. Kornicker told him to cheer up. He said that every man had a crook in his lot. Some men had big crooks, and some men had little crooks; and although this crook made rather a bad elbow in his lot, that perhaps all the rest was square and straight, and he could build on it to advantage, especially if it was twenty-five feet by a hundred, which was the ordinary width and length of ‘lots in general.’

Having delivered himself of this rather confused allegory, Mr. Kornicker, by way of farther consolation, drew out his snuff-box, and stretching out as far as was possible without falling from his chair, tendered it to the stranger, who, in return, leaning so far forward as slightly to raise his person from the chair, gently inserted his fingers in the box, and helped himself to a pinch, at the same time remarking that it ‘was a great comfort, in his trying situation, to find friends who sympathized with his misfortunes. That he *had* found it so; and that Mr. Kornicker was a man whose feelings did credit to human nature.’

Kornicker disclaimed being any thing above the ordinary run of men, or that his feelings were more than every other man possessed, or ought to possess. But the stranger was vehement in his assertions to the contrary; so much so, that he rose from his seat, and drawing a chair to the opposite side of Kornicker’s table, proposed that they should break fast together.

Kornicker shook his head:

‘It’s against the agreement,’ said he; ‘it can’t be done.’

‘But it *can*, Sir — it *shall*, Sir! A man of your sympathies is not to be met with every day, and must be breakfast-

ed with, whether he will or not — agreement or no agreement. Do n't agreement me !' said the stranger, lifting up his chair, and setting it down opposite Kornicker, with great emphasis. 'What's the natur' of this agreement?'

Mr. Kornicker assumed a very grave and legal expression of countenance, and without replying, asked :

'What's your name?'

'Ezra Scrake.'

'I, Edward Kornicker, forbid you, Ezra Scrake, from breakfasting with me ; telling you that it is contrary to a certain agreement, referred to but not set forth ; and I now repeat the request that you will forthwith retire to another table, and that I be permitted to take my meal by myself.' He threw himself back in his chair, and looked Mr. Scrake full in the face.

'And I, Ezra Scrake, say that I *won't* leave this table, and that I *will* breakfast with a fellow whose benevolence might warm the witals of a tiger.'

'Very well, Sir,' said Kornicker, relaxing from his former severe expression ; 'I've done my duty. Old Rust can't blame me. The breach of contract is not on my part. I'm acting under compulsion. Just recollect that I desired you to leave me, in case it gets me into hot water, and that you refused ; that's all. Now, old fellow, what'll you take? Only recollect that you are breakfasting with me under protest, and that each man rides his own pony.'

The stranger nodded, and said that of course he would 'foot his own bill.'

These preliminaries being settled, the boy, who had been standing at their elbow, in a state of ecstatic delight at the proceedings of Mr. Kornicker, with whom he had become familiar, and whom he regarded as a gentleman of great legal acumen, was desired by the stranger to hand him the

bill of fare, and not to keep him waiting all day. Having been gratified in this respect, Mr. Scrake commenced at the top and deliberately whispered his way to the bottom of the list.

‘Beef-steak: shall I say for two?’ asked he, looking up at Kornicker.

‘Yes, but always under protest,’ said Mr. Kornicker, winking at him. ‘Don’t forget that.’

‘Of course. Now, my son, what trimmings have you got?’ said he to the boy.

‘Taters.’

‘Are they kidneys, blue-noses, or fox? — and will they bu’st open white and mealy?’

‘They ’m prime,’ replied the boy.

‘Bring one for me — or, stop; are they extra?’

‘We throw them in with the steak, gratis.’

‘Then bring a dishful, with coffee, bread, and whatever else adds to the breakfast, without adding to the bill.’

The boy, having no other interest in the establishment than that of securing his own wages and meals, was highly delighted at this considerate order of Mr. Scrake, and forthwith disappeared to obey it.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Scrake, after having deliberately re-perused the bill of fare, and not observing any thing else which could be got for nothing, laid it down, and looking at Mr. Kornicker, who was gazing abstractedly at the table-cloth, said that he hoped he (Mr. Scrake) was not going to be impertinent; and as Mr. Kornicker made no other reply than that of looking at him, as if he considered it a matter of some doubt whether he was or was not, he elucidated the meaning of his remark, by inquiring who Old Rust was.

‘The old gentleman that caters for me,’ replied Kornicker carelessly.

‘And does he make you eat alone?’

‘If I dine double, he’ll stop the prog; that’s all.’

‘A sing’lar bargain — quite sing’lar; very sing’lar, in fact. Does he keep a tight eye over you?’

Mr. Kornicker did not exactly know what kind of an eye a tight eye was, but he replied: ‘Sometimes he does, sometimes he do n’t. He’s nigh enough to do it. His office is overhead.’

‘Lawyer, I suppose? — *must* be,’ said Mr. Scrake, drumming carelessly on the table.

‘You’re out, old fellow. I’m with him, and should know something of him; and he is n’t.’

‘Ah!’ said the stranger, leaning back and yawning, and then sharpening his knife on the fork. ‘What is he, then?’

Mr. Kornicker raised his finger gently to his nose, winked so knowingly at Mr. Scrake that he caused that gentleman to stop short in his performance to look at him; after which he shut both eyes, and gave vent to a violent inward convulsion of laughter.

‘What is he?’ repeated Kornicker; then sinking his voice, and leaning over the table, he whispered in Mr. Scrake’s ear, ‘He’s hell.’

‘No! he is n’t though, is he?’ said Mr. Scrake, dropping his knife and fork, and sinking back in his chair.

‘Yes, he is,’ repeated Mr. Kornicker; ‘and if you were a certain gentleman that I know, you’d find it out. *He* will some day, I rather think.’

‘Are *you* that individual?’ inquired Mr. Scrake, with an air of deep interest.

‘No, I a’n’t, but I suspect some one else is. But come,’ said he, ‘there’s the breakfast; so let’s be at it, and drop all other discussion.’

This remark found an answering echo in the stomach of

Mr. Scrake, who resumed the sharpening of his knife as the breakfast entered the room, and did not desist until the steak was on the table, when he immediately assaulted it.

‘Shall I help you? What part will you take?’

‘Any part,’ replied Kornicker, carelessly.

‘Well, it’s sing’lar; I never could carve. I’ll help you as I would help myself,’ said Mr. Scrake, in his ignorance depositing on Mr. Kornicker’s plate an exceedingly tough piece of dry meat, and upon his own a cut which was remarkably tender and juicy.

‘Do you always help yourself as you have helped me?’ said Mr. Kornicker, snuffing with great deliberation, and eyeing his portion with no very contented eye.

‘Always, always.’

‘Then let me tell you, my good fellow, that you do yourself d —— d great injustice.’

‘Ha! ha! good — very good; sheer ignorance on my part, upon my soul. But you were telling me about this man, this Rust,’ said Mr. Scrake, mashing his potatoes, and entombing a lump of butter in the heart of a small pyramid of them. ‘You said he was hell, or the Devil, or something of that sort. What then? Eh?’

Kornicker, though not at all pleased with the ignorance of his companion in the particular branch in which it had just displayed itself, was not of a sulky disposition, and was easily brought into a communicative mood, particularly as Mr. Scrake begged him, with tears in his eyes, to tell him which was the best part of a beef-steak, so that he might avoid in future the mortification of being guilty of a similar error.

As the coffee disappeared, and the beef-steak followed, Mr. Scrake seemed to relax, and to forget that his hat hung over his head, commemorative of the recent decease of Mrs.

Scrake, and became quite jocular on the subject of the fair sex, congratulating Kornicker upon his looks; calling him a lucky dog, and telling him that if *he* were him, he'd 'make up to some charming young woman with a fortune, and be off with her.' He then went into a detail of his own juvenile indiscretions, relating many incidents of his life; some of which were amusing, some ridiculous, some tragic, some pathetic, and not a few quite indecent. It was wonderful what a devil that fat-cheeked, little-eyed, round-stomached fellow had been. Who could resist the influence of such a man? Not poor Kornicker; it gradually had its effect upon him, for he in turn grew communicative. He grew merry over the rare doings which had taken place in Rust's den. He then descanted upon the peculiarities of the old man; his fierce fits of passion, his cold, shrewd, caustic manners, his long absences, and his sudden returns; how profoundly secret he kept himself and his mode of life. 'And,' said he, in conclusion, 'I know nothing of him. He's a queer dog, a wonderful queer one. It would take a long time to fathom him, I can tell you. I've been with him for a long time; and am his confidential adviser, his lawyer, and all that sort of thing; and yet I've never done but two things for him.'

'You do n't say so!' exclaimed Mr. Scrake, laying down his knife and fork, and looking at him with his mouth open; 'and pray what *were* those things?'

'I sued one man, (being a lawyer, you know,)' said he, nodding in an explanatory way at Mr. Scrake, 'and carried a letter to another.'

'Ah! who were those fortunate individuals?'

'Poh! I suppose there's no secret about it. The man sued was one Enoch Grosket. The other was one Henry Harson; a jolly old boy he *was*, too. I breakfasted with him; a prime fellow; keeps a d —— d ugly cur, though.'

‘Enoch Grosket, Henry Harson!’ said the stranger, musing; ‘I’ve heard of them, I think. Who are they?’

‘It is more than I can tell,’ replied Kornicker. ‘That’s the mystery of my situation. I know nothing about any thing I’m doing, or of Rust, or his acquaintances.’

‘Why, you must know what you sued the man for,’ said Mr. Scrake, earnestly; ‘you must know *that*, surely.’

‘Yes, but it’s a height of knowledge which don’t carry much information with it,’ replied Mr. Kornicker. ‘I sued him on a promissory note. What he made it for, or how Rust got it, or any thing more about him, or it, or Harson, or Rust, I know as little as you.’

The stranger drew himself up, and looking at him gravely, said in a serious and even stern tone: ‘Do you mean to say that you are entirely ignorant of every thing respecting this Rust; his family, his business, his acquaintances, his associates, his habits, his plans and operations? — in short, that you know nothing more than you have mentioned to me?’

The other nodded.

‘Waiter, my bill,’ said he in a peremptory tone.

The boy brought him a slip of paper, on which was written the amount.

He paid it without a word; walked across the room, took down his hat, put it on his head, and turning to Kornicker, said in a tone of solemn earnestness: ‘Young man, you’re in a bad way, a *very* bad way. Had I known with what people you were in the habit of associating before I sat down at that table, Ezra Scrake’s legs and yours would never have been under the same mahogany. A man in the employ of another, and know nothing of him! It’s enormous! He might be a murderer, a thief, a man-slaughterer, a *Burker*, an arsoner, or any thing that is bad. Young man, in spite

of the injury you've done me, I pity you ; nay, I forgive you.'

Mr. Kornicker was merely waiting for an opportunity to suggest to him that his company had not only been unsought, but actually forced upon him, and even under his solemn protest. But before he could do so, Mr. Scrake was in the street. On ascertaining that he was out of the hearing of Mr. Kornicker, he muttered to himself: 'It was no go. Waited for him two hours ; then spent an hour in pumping a dry well. Enoch Grosket has sent me on a fool's errand. Michael Rust knows too much to trust that addle-headed fool.'

Having given vent to these observations, he deliberately buttoned up his coat, and walked off.

CHAPTER XX.

IN a dark room which was lighted only by a single candle, which flared and dripped in the currents of air, as they eddied and whirled through the room, sat Tim Craig and his comrade, Bill Jones. They were sitting on two wooden benches in front of a fire, which they from time to time nourished with sticks from a heap of wood on the hearth. The fire kept smouldering and smoking, now and then springing up into a fitful blaze, which threw a spectral air over the room, peopling its dim recesses with fantastic forms, and then expired, leaving it more gloomy than ever. The appearance of the men, their subdued voices and startled looks, showed that at that particular time they were not altogether in a frame of mind to resist the gloomy influence of the place. The dark, lonely room, with its dim shadowy corners and gaping seams, through which the wind sighed and wailed, and the pattering of the rain as it swept heavily against the side of the house and on the roof, all tended to add to the melancholy and sombre tone of their feelings. Bill drew his bench to the fire, looked suspiciously about him, and then, as if half ashamed of having done so, said:

‘It’s a h—ll of a night! I don’t know how it is, but I’m not in trim to-night. Blow me, if the sight of that old fellow do n’t make one’s blood cold. I can’t get warm; and this fire keeps sputtering and smoking, as if to spite one.’

Tim Craig, to whom this remark was addressed, turned and looked him steadily in the face, without speaking; and

then his eyes wandered about the room, as if he were fearful of being watched or overheard in what he was going to say.

'Bill,' said he in a low voice, his thin lips quivering; but whether from anger or any other emotion, was a matter of much doubt; 'd——d if I know which way to leap! Enoch pulls one way and Rust another. Either of them could send us to kingdom come. Ugh! how cold it is! Something comes over me to-night—I can't tell what. I don't half like this job. Bill,' continued he after a pause, drawing nearer his comrade and lowering his voice, 'I'm haunted to-night. You know that fellow, the man up town, the cartman——' He hesitated, and leaned his mouth close to the ear of the other, while in the dim light his face seemed ghastly; 'the—the man, last year——'

Jones looked at him significantly; and then drew his finger across his throat. 'Do you mean that fellow?'

'Yes,' replied Craig in a husky tone, and scarcely able to articulate, for the choking in his throat. 'He's been *here* to-night. Three times I've caught him looking over my shoulder! God! There he is again! Light! light! light!' shouted he, springing up; 'make the fire burn, I say—make it burn! Heap on wood! heap it on! Do *any thing*—but keep HIM off!'

'Why, Tim, you seem to be took bad,' exclaimed his companion, at the same time getting on his knees, and setting assiduously to work to blow the fire. 'Come, this is worse than ever. We've got to work to-night; and it won't do to go into your fantasies.'

He paused in his remarks to apply his breath to the fire, and with such success, that in a few minutes a bright blaze was dancing up the chimney, lighting the whole room, and dispelling at once that shadowy appearance which its great size and dilapidated state had tended to give it.

‘There, now; that’s as comfortable a fire as you can want; and arter all, what you was just talking of was all fancy,’ said he, resuming his seat. ‘Dead men stay where you put ’em.’

Craig had been pacing furiously up and down the room, as if to outwalk some demon that *would* keep at his side; but he stopped short, and going up to his comrade, placed his hand on his shoulder and said: ‘Bill Jones, that’s a lie! Whoever says so, lies! Dead men *don’t* stay where you put ’em. I’ve had that man walking with me for hours together. I’ve had him at the same table with me, when I ate; I’ve had him in bed with me — ay, all night long; and to-night he’s been here, with his face almost touching mine. Blast him! if I could but get him by the throat, I’d throttle him!’

‘Come, come, Tim, none of this,’ said Jones, with more gentleness than might have been expected from one of his rough exterior. ‘I’m sorry for you; you must feel bad enough, or you would n’t go on so. I’ve knowed you since we were boys together; and I know it’s not a little matter that works you up like you are now. Come, sit down.’ He led him to a seat, and kneeling at his feet, took his hand in both of his. ‘Do n’t give in so, my old feller. Do n’t you know, when we were boys, how we all looked up to you; and although I could have doubled you up, with my big limbs, yet you always had the mastery over me? Ha! ha! Tim, do n’t you remember the old schoolmaster, too? Hallo! what now?’

Craig leaned his head upon Jones’s shoulder, and sobbed aloud. ‘Do n’t talk of those days, Bill; it’ll drive me mad. Oh! if I was a boy again! But no, no; I’m a fool,’ exclaimed he, springing up, apparently swallowing his emotion at once fierce gulp, and in an instant becoming as hardened

as ever. 'Am I crazy to-night, or *what* ails me, that I've become as white-livered as a girl? Where's the grog? Give us a sup; and we'll see what's to be done.'

'There, now you talk right,' said Jones, putting his hand in his coat-pocket, and drawing out a small bottle, cased in leather; 'that'll wake you up. And now to business. You have n't told me what's to be done, and who you'll go with, Grosket, or Rust.'

'Rust,' said Craig, abruptly; 'he's our man. He can bleed; Enoch can't. *He* never fails in what he wants to do; Enoch *does*: but they are both devils incarnate. I'd rather fight against ten other men than either of them; but rather against Enoch than Mike Rust.'

'Well, what is it? He told you all about it. I could n't hear what he said.'

'He's been on the prowl for two days; God knows what he's after; but he wants us to break into a house, and steal a girl.'

'The profligate villain!' exclaimed Mr. Jones, with an air of great horror. 'I'll tell his father of him!'

'It's only a child.'

'Oh! that alters the case,' said Mr. Jones. 'Then I'll tell his wife.'

'It's nothing of that sort,' said Tim, peevishly. 'I can't joke to-night. I told him how Enoch had helped some one steal some children, and how one of them had got away, and where she was. We are to go to the house, get the girl at all hazards, rob the house if we choose, and bring *her* here. What he wants of her, who she is, is more than I know. 'You are to get her, and ask no questions:' that's what he said.'

'Who's in the house?'

'Only an old man and a woman.'

‘The man — is he used up, or what?’

‘He’s a bull-dog,’ was the laconic reply.

‘We’ll want *them*, then,’ said Jones, pointing to a closet which was partly open, showing several pairs of pistols on a shelf.

‘I suppose so. Bring ’em out, and look at the locks; not the flint-locks — it’s a wet night; get the others. We must have no trifling.’

Jones made no other reply than to take out a pair of pistols, which he carried to the light, and examined their locks.

‘Are they loaded?’ inquired Craig.

Jones nodded: ‘Two bullets in each! Suppose they twig us? — are we to fight or run?’

‘‘You had better die than fail.’ He said that,’ replied Craig in a low tone; ‘and when I saw his look, I thought so too. D — n him! I’m afraid of him. It’ll be no baby-work if they discover us.’

The other robber made no reply, but continued to examine the pistols, carefully rubbing the barrels, to remove any trace of rust, and working the hammers backward and forward; after which he put two fresh caps on the cones.

‘All right! I’m ready as soon as it’s time. When do you go?’

‘Not till an hour after midnight. That’s the time when folks sleep soundest. You could cut a man’s throat then without waking him. Do n’t let the fire go down,’ said he, turning an apprehensive eye toward the fire-place. ‘It’s cold, and we’ve three hours to be here yet.’

Jones, with the same good-natured alacrity which he had before displayed, threw several sticks on the fire, and then turning to his comrade, said:

‘Suppose we rattle the dice till midnight?’

Craig shook his head.

‘What say you to the paste-board?’

‘No cards for me,’ replied the other, seating himself and leaning his cheeks between his hands, with his elbows on his knees, and his eyes fastened on the fire. ‘I want to be on the move. God! How I wish it was time! This cursed room is enough to suffocate one. Curse me, but it smells of coffins and dead men, and is as cold as a church-vault. It goes to a fellow’s very bones.’

There was something so unusual in the mood of his comrade, that Jones at last started up and said:

‘Blast me, Tim, but you must stop this. You’re making me as wild and frightened as yourself. Talk of your beaks, and courts, and prisons, and bullets and pistols as much as you like; but, d — n it, leave your dead men, and coffins, and vaults, and all them ’ere to themselves, will you? Curse me if you a’n’t enough to make a sneak of any man. So just stop, will you? If you can’t talk of something better, do n’t talk at all.’

Craig took him at his word; and drawing his bench closer to the fire, maintained his position, without moving or speaking, for more than an hour.

Jones, in the meanwhile, for want of employment, again examined the pistols; drew out the loads, and reloaded them; then going to the closet, he brought out two very dangerous-looking knives, and after trying the points on his finger, proceeded to oil them. This over, he betook himself to whistling, at the same time keeping time to his music by drumming his heel heavily on the floor. This, however, could not last for ever; and finally, wrapping a heavy coat around his shoulders, he stretched himself at full length in front of the fire, and was soon sound asleep.

Not so his companion. In silence, without stirring, and scarcely breathing, yet wide awake, with ears alive to every

sound, and distorting every sigh of the wind into the voice of a human being, he sat with white lips and a shaking hand until the faint chime of a clock, which reached him even above the noise of the storm, told him that the hour was come.

‘Wake up!’ said he, touching Jones with his foot. ‘It’s time to be off.’

Jones, with instinctive quickness, obeyed the call by springing to his feet, apparently as wide awake as if he had not closed his eyes during the night.

‘All right!’ said he, looking hastily about the room. ‘Hey! but what’s all this noise?’

‘It’s a horrible night; all hell seems abroad,’ said Craig. ‘But come; get ready, and let’s be off.’

‘Will we want any of *them*?’ asked Jones, pointing to an upper shelf in the closet, on which were lying several uncouth-looking instruments, the nature of which was best known to themselves.

‘Take the small crow; we may want *that*, but nothing more.’

‘The bag too?’ inquired Bill.

‘No; it’s a girl we’ve to steal; d—n it, I wish it was n’t!’

While he was speaking, he had thrust his arms into a shaggy great-coat, and was tying a thick woollen wrapper over his mouth, so that the last remark was nearly lost in it. He then put on an oil-skin cap, not unlike what is called by sailors a ‘sou’-wester,’ and stood watching the proceedings of his comrade, which were by no means as expeditious as his own; for that gentleman proceeded very leisurely to encase his feet in a pair of thick woollen stockings, and a pair of shoes more capable of resisting the wet than those which he then wore. After this he put on an oil-cloth jacket over his

other one, and surmounted the whole by a coat similar to that worn by Craig.

‘One would suppose you was a baby, from your tenderness to yourself,’ said Craig, impatiently. ‘You a’ n’t sugar, are you? Do you expect the rain to melt you?’

‘I’m a sweet fellow, I know,’ replied the other, carefully buttoning his coat to the chin. ‘I may be sugar, for all I know: should n’t be surprised if I was. I’ve been told so afore this; let me tell you *that*, my old feller. You a’ n’t in kidney to-night. Take another pull at little Job,’ said he, handing him the bottle, ‘and we’ll be off.’

Whatever Craig’s contempt of the rain might be, it did not seem to extend to other liquids; for he took the bottle, and applying it to his lips, did not remove it until the bottom of it was not a little inclined toward the ceiling; perhaps its elevation might even have increased, had not Jones reminded him that, it being late at night, the vessel could not be replenished, and that there was ‘a small child’ to be helped after him, who hated above all things sucking at the neck of a dry bottle.

Craig permitted the bottle to be taken from his hand, and stood with his eyes fixed on the floor in deep thought; nor did he arouse himself until Jones took him by the arm, and said:

‘Come on; all’s ready.’

Craig started at the words. ‘The pistols and the glim?’

‘I’ve got ’em.’

‘And the crow-bar?’

‘All snug *here*,’ said Jones, touching the pocket of his great-coat.

‘Good! Follow me.’ Craig strode across the room, and went out.

It was a dreadful night. The rain spouted furiously from

the water-conductors, and sped boiling and foaming through the streets. The wind too caught it up as it fell, and swept it in long sheets through the streets; and as the two men battled their way along, it seemed actually to hiss around them, like the long lash of a whip. The tempest had a rare frolic that night, and right merrily did it howl over the house-tops, and through the narrow streets; and fast and furiously did the water bubble and boil, as it dashed on like mad to the deep river, to take refuge in her bosom from its tormentor, the hurricane.

A right glorious night it was for rapine and midnight murder. The house-dog had slunk into his straw, and the watchman was dozing away under some shed, or in some dark door-way. There was nothing to stand in the way of these enterprising men, save the fierce storm, and what cared they for that? It was the very night for them. If it came to blows, or if a life were to be taken, the death-cry would be lost in the howling of the wind; it was the night of all nights for *them*; and so thought Craig and his comrade, as they toiled along, with their heads bent down to keep the rain out of their faces.

‘Is it far?’ at last inquired Jones: ‘we’ve come a mile.’

‘Half a mile more,’ replied Craig; and that was all that passed between them until they stood in front of Harrison’s house.

‘This is it,’ said Craig.

He lifted the latch of the gate opening into the door-yard, and approached the house.

‘Where are we to begin?’ inquired Jones.

Craig pointed to a small window on a level with, or rather sunk somewhat below, the surface of the ground, with a kind of area around it. ‘*There*; there are iron gratings,

but they are set in the wood, which is all rotten. Quick ! try them with the crow-bar ; they 'll give way.'

Jones, with an alacrity and adroitness which showed a long experience in such matters, after feeling his way to the place, and passing his hand over the bars to discover their exact situation, inserted his crow-bar between the stone-work and the wood, and at the very first application forced the whole out. A wooden shutter which opened from within, being merely secured by a wooden button, gave way before a strong pressure of his hand, and left the entrance open.

'Go in quick ! — do n't keep a fellow in the rain all night,' said Craig, in a sharp whisper. 'It's only three feet to the floor. Get in, will you ?'

'Shut up ! Cuss ye !' exclaimed Jones, savagely ; 'let me take my own way.'

As he spoke, he inserted his feet, and gradually let himself down until he touched the floor. In a moment Craig was at his side, and closed the shutter.

'Now, quick ! a light !' whispered he. In another minute the dark lantern was lighted, and Craig, taking it up and throwing back the slide, turned it carefully around the place. It was a cellar, filled with empty barrels and boxes ; and seemed to be a sort of receptacle for rubbish of all descriptions. At one end was a door leading to the upper part of the house. It was partly open. Without a word, Craig went to it and ascended the stairs, which were shut off from the kitchen by another door.

Craig opened this, and crossed the room with a quick yet stealthy step, but with the air of one perfectly familiar with the precincts. Passing through the entry, he went into Harson's sitting-room ; thence into the outer room, communicating with the street.

'We 'll open the street-door, Bill,' said he, 'in case we

have to bolt quick. There,' said he, as he drew back two bolts, and turned the key, 'do n't forget the road. Leave all the doors open. That'll do. We'll get the girl first, and then we'll see what's to be done. First door at the head of the stairs. Quiet, quiet; there's a dog in the next room.'

Stealing up the stairs, they opened the door, and the full light of the lamp fell in the child's room. They could hear her low, regular breathing as she slept. Craig handed the light to his companion.

'I'll take her,' whispered he. 'Bring the light so that I can see. There, that will do.' He bent over her. As he did so, he accidentally stirred the bed-clothes, and the child opened her eyes; and before he could prevent it, a single wild cry escaped her, as she caught sight of the savage faces which were bending over her.

'Christ! how she yelps!' exclaimed Craig, in a fierce whisper. He clapped his hand over her mouth. 'By G—d! there goes the dog too! we must be off. My chicken,' said he, in a low tone, 'if you understand plain English, you know what I mean when I say, if you whisper loud enough to wake a cat, you'll get a bullet through your head. Hist! Bill, was that a door creaking? I can't hear for the d——d dog!' Both stopped and listened.

'It was only the door below,' said Jones. 'Quick! quick!'

Craig caught the child out of bed, wrapped a blanket about her to stifle her cries, in case she should make any, and moved to the door.

'Turn the light on the door; I can't see. There, that will do. Now, then, it's open, and the game's ours.'

'*Not quite!*' said a stern voice; and the next instant Craig received a blow from a fist which sent him reeling back into the room.

'Watch! watch! murder! thieves!' bellowed Harrison

from without, while, from the din, at least forty pag-dogs seemed to be barking in all parts of the entry.

‘Shoot him! shoot him down!’ shouted Craig, springing to the door. ‘By G—d! the door’s shut, and he’s holding it from the outside!’ exclaimed he, pulling it with all his force. ‘He’s as strong as a bull. Quick! shoot through the panel! He must stand behind the knob. Fire!’

Instead of obeying him, Bill Jones seized the child. ‘Hark ye, old fellow,’ said he; ‘shut up, or I’ll dash this girl’s brains out. If I do n’t, d—n me!’

This appeal was heard, and operated upon Harson; but in a different manner from what they expected, for he relaxed his hold of the door so suddenly, that Craig fell backward; and bursting into the room, with a single blow he prostrated the burglar, who was bending over the child, and dashed the light to the ground. His advantage was only momentary; for in a minute Craig flung himself upon him. But the old man’s blood was up. In his young days he had been a powerful wrestler; and even now the robber found him no easy conquest, for he said, in a husky tone: ‘This won’t do, Bill. Drop the girl and come here. This blasted old fool will keep us all night.’

Instead of obeying him, Jones stole to the head of the stairs and listened. In an instant he sprang back.

‘We must be off, Tim! Some one is coming. Quick! Let loose the man.’

But there were two to that bargain; for Harson had heard the words as well as the robber, and he held him with a gripe like a vice.

‘Let go your hold, and we’ll be off,’ said Craig, in a husky voice.

‘Never! You shall taste what you are so ready to give!’ said Harson, fiercely.

'Bill, there's no time to lose!' exclaimed Craig, in a stern tone. "Shoot him, and have done with it! There, now; I'll hold him.'

The report of a pistol followed; but as it did so, a deep groan came from Craig. 'You've done for me, Bill. The old fellow dodged. Run! run! — my rope's out.'

'Can't I help you, Tim?' exclaimed Jones.

'No, no; go! Get off. I'll not blow on you.'

Thus adjured, the robber paused no longer. But escape was now no easy matter; for at the door he was saluted by a loud voice:

"Hallo! Harry; is this you?"

'No, no, a thief! Grab him, Frank!'

The next instant Jones was in the grip of a powerful man, but he was a giant himself, and desperate. He flung himself with all his force upon his adversary, and both went to the floor together; Jones's hand on the other's throat.

There is something fearful in the grapple of a desperate man, even when feeble in frame; and in the case of Jones, who knew that every thing depended on his efforts, and whose fierce spirit was backed by muscles of iron, the conflict was one of such fury that the very walls of the old house shook. From step to step, from the landing to the hall, they fought; tugging and tearing at each other like two dogs, while Harry Harrison in vain hung about them; the darkness and the rapidity of their motions preventing him from distinguishing friend from foe.

'By G—d! he's an ox for strength,' at last said Frank; 'if you'd do any thing, Harry, go to the door and sing out for the watch. I'll hold him.'

It might be that in order to utter these words the Doctor relaxed his grasp, or it might be that the knowledge of the increased risk that he would run gave additional strength to

the robber; for he made a single desperate effort, tore himself from the iron grasp that held him down, rose to his knee, and striking the Doctor a blow in the face that for a moment bewildered him, sprang to his feet, dashed Harson from the door, bounded across the room between the hall and the street-door, and darted into the street at full speed.

‘D—n me, Harry, he’s off!’ said the Doctor, assuming a sitting posture on the floor. ‘He deserves to escape, for he fought like a devil for it. D—n him, he’s a brave fellow! There’s no use in chasing him, I suppose; you and I a’ n’t cut out for running. If that last crack had hit me on the nose, it would have smashed it. Come, let’s look after the other fellow; perhaps he’s playing ’possum, and may be off. If you do n’t stop the barking of that d——d dog of yours, I’ll kill him.’ Groping their way back to the upper floor, from which they caught sight of Spite, rapidly retreating as they advanced, they found the housekeeper standing in the room which they had just left, arrayed in a particularly large white night-gown, and wearing a particularly high cap, with a particularly fierce white ribbon on the top of it, and bearing in her hand a dim rush-light.

‘Quick! Martha; more lights, and some brandy!’ said Harson, pushing past her. ‘Thank God! *you’re* not hurt, Annie! Come, Doctor, this poor devil is human,’ said he, pointing to Craig, who lay on the floor apparently dead. ‘Look to him; he breathes. I hear him.’

It needed no second appeal; for before he had finished, the Doctor had turned the robber over, opened his vest, and displayed a wound in his breast. He thrust his finger in it, and then looking up at Harry, shook his head.

‘He’s a case; *must* go!’

‘Poor fellow! God only knows what may have driven him to this. Help me to put him on the bed.’

Taking him in their arms, they placed him on the bed; and there they sat and watched him until the dawn of day. The bright sunshine came cheerily in at the window; the storm had passed, and the sky looked clear and blue, as if it had never been ruffled. And at that hour, and in that room, with the golden sunbeams streaming in, lay Tim Craig, his head pressed heavily back upon the pillow, and bound round with a cloth dabbled in blood. His face was blackened and bruised, and his shirt and the bed-clothes stained with blood. His breath was short and heavy, and at times gasping; his mouth half open, and his dull eye fixed with a heavy leaden stare at the ceiling. His race was nearly run. He seemed utterly unconscious of the presence of any one, until the door opened, and Harson, who had gone out, came in.

He went to the bed, and leaned over the burglar. As he did so, his shadow, falling across the man’s face, attracted his attention, and he turned his heavy-eye, and asked, in a husky voice:

‘Will I go? What does he say?’

Harson shook his head. ‘It’s almost over with you, my poor fellow; God help you!’

The man turned his head away and looked at the wall.

‘Do you understand me?’ said Harson, anxiously bending over him.

‘Yes, yes,’ replied the man in the same mumbling tone; ‘yes, I’m come for; my time’s up. I was a strong man yesterday; and now! now——! It’s very strange! very strange!’ He muttered a few inarticulate words, and then resumed his old position, looking at the wall, no sound es-

caping him except the low panting of his breath. Suddenly he said, in a louder tone :

‘It’s all very strange *here*.’ He pointed to his head. ‘Were you ever at sea? Yes? Well, well — did you ever see a ship toss and swing to and fro — to and fro — to and fro, and yet keep straight on? Well, my brain reels and swims in that way. There are dim, strange things; men, beasts, birds, and ghosts hovering about me; but I see straight on, and they are on all sides of the path; yet I see it straight, straight, straight and plain. I’m going on it. They can’t make me swerve; but it’s awful to have such company about me on such a journey. Come close to me!’

Harson drew his chair close to the bed and sat down. ‘I’ve sent for a clergyman,’ said he, in a low tone; ‘he’ll be here presently. You must endeavor to chase away these thoughts; they are only dreams.’

Craig’s thin lips contracted into a smile which was horrible, as, without moving his eyes from their fixed position, he whispered: ‘No, no; he won’t do it — he’ll not do it. No; I won’t blow on you, Bill. Ha! how hot that bullet was! Lift me up! *He*’s there! Yes, lift me up, so that I may be above him; up! up! Ha! ha! that’ll do. Bill, do you recollect the old schoolmaster? There! Up! up!’

Harson put his arm under him, and raised him. As he did so, Craig’s head fell against his shoulder, dabbling it with blood. The next instant he stretched himself out at full length; gave a shudder; a long rattling breath followed; and he fell back on the pillow — dead.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN the same room from which Craig and Jones had set out on their ill-fated errand, and at the hour of noon on the following day, the latter was crouching in front of the fireplace, which had been so bright and cheery the night before, but which now contained nothing except ashes and a few half-burned stumps, charred and blackened, but entirely extinguished. Over these Jones bent, sometimes shivering, holding his hands to them, apparently unconscious that they emitted no heat, and at others dabbling in the ashes, and muttering to himself. But a few hours had elapsed since he had left that room a daring, desperate man; yet in that short time a frightful change had come over him. His eyes were bloodshot; his lips swollen and bloody, and the under one deeply gashed, as if he had bitten it through; his cheeks haggard and hollow, his hair dishevelled, his dress torn, and almost dragged from his person. But it was not in the outward man alone that this alteration had taken place. In spirit, as well as in frame, he was crushed. His former iron bearing was gone; there was no energy, no strength left. He seemed but a wreck, shattered and beaten down — down to the very dust. At times he mumbled to himself, and moaned like one in suffering. Then he rose and paced the room with long strides, dashing his hand against his forehead, and uttering execrations. The next moment he staggered to his seat, buried his face in his hands, and sobbed like a child.

‘Tim,’ said he, in a low broken voice, ‘poor old Tim; I killed you, I know I did; but blast ye! I loved you, Tim.

But it's of no use, now; you're dead, and can never know how much poor Bill Jones cared for you. No, no; you never can, Tim. We were boys together, and have always roughed it through life together until last night; and now I'm alone; no one left — no one, *no one!*'

In the very frenzy of grief that succeeded these words, he flung himself upon the floor, dashing his head and hands against it, and rolling and writhing like one in mortal pain. This outbreak of passion was followed by a kind of stupor; and crawling to his seat, he remained there, like one stunned and bereft of strength. Stolid, scarcely breathing, and, but for the twitching of his fingers, motionless as stone; with his eyes fixed on the blank wall, he sat as silent as one dead; but with a heart on fire, burning with a remorse never to be quenched; with a soul hurrying and darting to and fro in its mortal tenement, to escape the lashings of conscience. Struggle on! struggle on! There is no escape, until that strong heart is eaten away by a disease for which there is no cure; until that iron frame, worn down by suffering, has become food for the worm, and that spirit and its persecutor stand before their final Judge, in the relations of criminal and accuser.

A heavy step announced that some one was ascending the stairs. Jones moved not. A loud knock at the door followed. Still he did not stir. The door was then flung open in no very gentle manner, for it struck the wall behind it with a noise that made the room echo; but a cannon might have been fired there, and Jones would not have heard it.

The person, however, who had thus unceremoniously opened the way for his entrance, seemed perfectly indifferent whether his proceedings were agreeable or otherwise. His first movement on entering the room was to shut the door after him

and lock it; his next was to look about it to see whether it contained any other person than Jones. Having satisfied himself on that score, he walked rapidly up to him and tapped him on the shoulder.

Jones looked listlessly up at him, and then turning away, dabbled in the ashes, without uttering a word.

‘Hallo! Bill Jones,’ said the stranger, after looking at him a moment or two in evident surprise, ‘what ails you?’

The man made no reply.

‘So you are sulky!’ said the other. ‘Well, follow your own humor; but answer me one question: where’s Craig?’

Jones shuddered; and his hand shook violently. Rising up, half tottering, he turned and stood face to face with his visitor.

‘Good-day to ye, Mr. Grosket,’ said he, with a ghastly smile, and extending his hand to him. ‘Good-day to ye. It’s a bright day, on the heels of such a night as the last was.’

‘Good God! what ails you, man?’ exclaimed Grosket, recoiling before the wild figure which confronted him; and then taking his hand, he said: ‘Your hand is hot as fire, your eyes bloodshot, and your face covered with blood. What have you been at? What ails you?’

Jones passed his hand feebly across his forehead, and then replied: ‘I’m sick at heart!’

He turned from Grosket, and again crouched upon the hearth, mumbling over his last words, ‘Sick at heart! sick at heart!’ — nor did he appear to recollect Grosket’s question respecting Craig. If he did, he did not answer it, but, with his arms locked over his knees, he rocked to and fro, like one in great pain.

‘Are you ill, man, or are you drunk?’ demanded Grosket, pressing heavily on his shoulder. ‘Speak out, I say: what

ails you? If you don't find your tongue, I'll find it for you.'

Jones, thus addressed, made an effort to rally, and partially succeeded; for after a moment he suddenly rose up erect, and in a clear, bold voice, replied:

'I'm not drunk, Mr. Grosket, but I *am* ill; God knows what's the matter with me. Look at me!' he continued, stepping to where the light was strongest; 'Look at me well. Would n't you think I'd been on my back for months?'

'You look ill enough,' was the blunt reply.

'Well, then, what do you want?' demanded Jones, in a peevish tone; 'why do you trouble me? I can't bear it. Go away; go away.'

'I will, when you've answered my question. Where's Craig?'

'I do n't know. He was here last night; but he went out, and has n't been here since.'

'Where did he go?'

Jones shook his head: 'He did n't say.'

'Was he alone?'

'No,' replied the other, evidently wincing under these questions; 'No; there was a man with him. That's all I know about either of them. There, there; get through with your questions. They turn my head,' said he, in an irritable tone.

'Why did he take a stranger?' demanded Grosket, without paying the least attention to his manner. 'You forget that I know you and he generally hunt in couples.'

It might have been the cold of the room striking through to his very bones that had so powerful an effect on Jones, but he shook from head to foot, as he answered:

'Look at me! God! would you have a man out in such

a night as that was, when he's almost ready for his winding-sheet?'

Grosket's only reply was to ask another question.

'What was the name of the man who went with him?'

'I do n't know.'

'What kind of a man was he?' asked Grosket.

'A man of about my size,' replied Jones sullenly.

'What did they go to do?'

Jones hesitated, as if in doubt what answer to make, and then, as if adopting an open course, he said: 'I've know'd you a good while, Mr. Grosket, and you won't blab, if I tell you what I suspect, will ye? It's only guess-work, after all. Promise me that; I know your word is good.'

Grosket paused a moment before he made the promise; and then said: 'Well, I'll keep what you tell me to myself. Now then.'

'It was a house-breaking business,' said Jones, sinking his voice. 'They took pistols with them; and I heard Tim tell the other one to take the crow-bar and the glim. That's all I know. I was too much down to listen. There; go away now. I've talked till my head is almost split. Talking drives me mad. Go away.'

Grosket stood perfectly still, in deep thought. The story might be true; for the city was ringing with the news of the burglary, and of the death of one of the burglars by the hands of his comrade. It was rumored, too, that the dead man had been identified by some of the officers of the police, and that his name was Craig. It was this, taken in connection with the facts that the attempt had been made on Harson's house, that an effort had been made to carry off the child who lived with him, and of its being known to Grosket that Rust had often employed these two men in matters requiring great energy and few scruples, that had

induced him thus early to visit their haunt, to ascertain the truth of his suspicions, and to endeavor, if possible, to ferret out the plans of their employer. The replies of Jones, short and abrupt as they were, convinced him that his suspicions respecting Craig were correct; but who could the other man be?

Engrossed with his own thoughts, he commenced walking up and down the room. At last he stopped at its farthest end.

Jones, in the meantime, seated himself; and leaning his elbows on his knees, hid his face in his hand. He was disturbed, however, by feeling himself shaken roughly by the shoulder. 'What you've just been telling me is a lie!' said Grosket sternly. 'You should know me well enough not to run the risk of trifling with me. I want the truth, and nothing else. Where were *you* last night?'

Jones looked up at him, and then answered in a sullen tone: 'I've told you once; I was here.'

Grosket went to a dark corner of the room and brought back a great-coat, completely saturated with water. 'This room scarcely leaks enough to do that,' said he, throwing it on the floor in front of Jones. 'Ha! what's that in the pocket?'

He thrust in his hand and drew out a pistol. The hammer was down, the cap exploded, and the inside of the muzzle blackened by burnt powder.

'Fired off!' said he. 'You told the truth. The man who went with Craig *did* look like you. I know the rest. Tim Craig is dead, and you shot him.'

An expression of strange meaning crossed the face of the burglar as he returned the steady look of his visitor without making any reply. But Grosket had not yet finished with him; for he said in a low, savage tone: 'Now mark me well.

If you lie in what you tell me, I'll hang you. Who employed you to do this job?'

Jones eyed him for a moment, and then turned away impatiently and said: 'I don't know what you're talking about. Don't worry me. I'm sick and half crazy. Get away, will ye!'

'*This to me! to me!*' exclaimed the other, stepping back, his eyes flashing fire; 'you forget yourself.'

Jones rose up, his red hair hanging like ropes about his face, and his bloodshot eyes and disfigured features giving him the look rather of a wild beast than of a man. Shaking his finger at Grosket, he said: 'Keep away from me to-day, I say. There's an evil spell over me. Come to-morrow, but don't push me to-day, or God knows what you may drive me to do. There, there — go.'

Still Grosket stirred not, but with a curling lip and an eye as bright as his own, and voice so fearfully quiet and yet stern that at another time it might have quelled even the strong spirit of the robber, he said: 'Enoch Grosket never goes until his object is attained.'

'Then you won't go?' demanded Jones.

'No!'

Jones made a hasty step toward him; but whatever may have been his purpose — and from the expression of his face, there was little doubt but that it was a hostile one — he was diverted from it by hearing a hand on the latch of the door, and a voice from without demanding admittance.

'It is Rust,' exclaimed Grosket, in a sharp whisper. He touched the burglar on the shoulder, and said in the same tone, 'I'm going in *there*.' He pointed to a closet in a dark part of the room, nearly concealed by the wainscoting. 'Let him in, and betray me if you dare!'

'You seem to know our holes well,' muttered Jones.

'You've been here afore.' Grosket made no reply, but hurried across the room and secreted himself in the closet, which evidently had been constructed as a place of concealment, either for the tenants of the room themselves, or for whatever else it might not suit their fancy to have too closely examined.

Jones stared after him, apparently forgetting the applicant for admission, until a renewed and very violent knocking recalled his attention to it. He then went to the door, drew back the bolt, and walked to his seat, without even glancing to see who came in, or who the person was who followed so closely at his heels. Nor did he look around until he felt his arm roughly grasped, and a sharp, stern voice hissing in his ear:

'So, so! a fine night's work you've made of it. Tim Craig is dead, and the whole city is already ringing with the news; and *you*, you're a murderer!'

Jones started from his seat with the sudden spasmodic bound of one who has received a mortal thrust. He stared wildly at the sharp thin face which had almost touched his, and then sat down and said:

'Do n't talk to me so, Mr. Rust; I can't bear it.'

'Ho, ho! your conscience is tender, is it? It has a raw spot that won't bear handling, has it? We'll see to that. But to business,' said he, his face white with rage; his black eyes blazing, and his voice losing its smoothness, and quivering as he spoke.

'I've come here to fulfil my agreement; you were to get that child for me to-day. I've come for her; where is she?'

Jones looked at him with an expression of impatience mingled with contempt, but made him no answer.

'Tim Craig was to have gone to that house; he was to have carried her off; he was to have had her here, *here*,

HERE!’ said he, in the same fierce tone. ‘Why has n’t he done it?’

‘Because he’s dead,’ said Jones savagely.

‘I’m glad of it! I’m glad of it!’ exclaimed Rust. ‘He deserved it. The coward! *Let* him die.’

‘Tim Craig was no coward,’ replied Jones, in a tone which, had Rust been less excited, would have warned him to desist.

‘Ha!’ exclaimed Rust, scanning him from head to foot, as if surprised at his daring to contradict him, ‘would you gainsay me?’

Jones returned his look without flinching, his teeth firmly set and grating together. At last he said:

‘I *do* gainsay you; and I *do* say, whoever calls Tim Craig a coward, lies!’

‘*This*, and from *you*!’ exclaimed Rust, shaking his thin finger in his very face; ‘*this* from you; *you*, a housebreaker, a thief, and last night the murderer of your comrade. Ho! ho! it makes me laugh! Fool! How many lives have you? One word of mine could hang you.’

‘*You’ll* never hang *me*,’ replied Jones, in the same low, savage tone. ‘I wish you had, before that cursed job of yours made me put a bullet in poor Tim. I wish you had; but it is too late. You won’t *now*.’

Words cannot describe the fury of Michael Rust at seeing himself thus bearded by one whom he had been used to see truckle to him, whom he considered the mere tool of Craig, and whom he had never thought it worth while even to consult in their previous interviews.

‘Won’t I? *won’t* I? Look to yourself,’ muttered he, shaking his finger at him with a slow, cautioning gesture: ‘Look to yourself.’

‘You’re right, I *will*; I say I *will*,’ exclaimed Jones, con-

fronting him. 'I say I *will* ; and now I do !' He grasped him by the throat and shook him as if he had been a child.

'I might as well kill him at once,' muttered he, without heeding the struggles of Rust. 'It's *him* or *me*. I'll do it.'

Coming to this fatal conclusion, he flung Rust on the floor and leaped upon him. At this moment, however, the door of the closet was thrown open, and Grosket, whom he had entirely forgotten, sprang suddenly out :

'Come, come, this won't do !' said he ; 'no murder !'

Jones made no effort to resist the jerk at his arm with which Grosket accompanied his words, but quietly rose, and said :

'Well, he drove me to it. He may thank *you* for his life, not *me*.'

Relieved from his antagonist, Rust recovered his feet, and turning to Grosket, said, in a sneering tone :

'Michael Rust thanks Enoch for having used his influence with his friend to prevent the commission of a crime which might have made both Enoch and his crony familiar with a gallows. A select circle of acquaintance friend Enoch has.'

Grosket quietly pointed to the closet and said :

'You forget that I have been there ever since you came in the room ; and have overheard every thing that passed between you and *my* friend.'

Rust bit his lip.

'Do n't let it annoy you,' continued he, 'for the most of what I heard I knew before. I have had my eye on you from the time we parted. With all your benevolent schemes respecting myself I am perfectly familiar. The debt which you bought up to arrest me on ; your attempt to have me indicted on a false charge of felony ; the quiet hint dropped in another quarter, that if I should be found with my throat cut or a bullet in my head, you would n't break your heart ;

I know them all; but I did not avail myself of the law. Shall I tell you why, Michael Rust? Because I had a revenge sweeter than the law could give.'

'Friend Enoch is welcome to it when he gets it,' replied Rust, in a soft tone. 'But the day when it will come is far off.'

'The day is at hand,' replied Grosket. 'It is here: it is now. Not for a mine of gold would I forego what I now know; not for any thing that is dear in the world's eyes would I spare you one pang that I can now inflict.'

Rust smiled incredulously, but made no reply.

'Your schemes are frustrated,' continued Grosket. 'The children are both found; their parentage known; *your* name blasted. The brother who fostered you and loaded you with kindness will have his eyes opened to your true character; and you will be a felon, amenable to the law, whenever any man shall think fit to call it down upon your head. But this is nothing to what is in reserve for you.'

'Well,' said Rust, with the same quiet smile: 'please to enumerate what other little kindnesses you have in store for me.'

'I will,' replied Grosket. '*I* was once a happy man. I had a wife and daughter, whom I loved. My wife is dead; what became of my child? I say,' exclaimed he bitterly, 'what became of my child?'

'Young women will forget themselves sometimes,' said Rust, his thin lip curling. 'She became a harlot — *only* a harlot.'

Grosket grew pale, and his voice became less clear, as he answered:

'You're right — you're right! why shrink from the word? It's a harsh one; but it's God's truth; she *did* — and she died.'

‘That’s frank,’ said Rust, ‘quite frank. I am a straightforward man, and always speak the truth. I’m glad to see that friend Enoch can bear it like a Christian.’

A loud, taunting laugh broke from Grosket; and then he said:

‘Thus much for *me*; now for yourself, Michael Rust. *You* once had a wife.’

Rust’s calm sneer disappeared in an instant, and he seemed absolutely to wither before the keen flashing eye which was fixed steadfastly on his.

‘She lived with you two years; and then she became — shall I tell you what?’

Rust’s lips moved, but no sound came from them. Grosket bent his lips to his ear, and whispered in it. Rust neither moved nor spoke. He seemed paralyzed.

‘But she died,’ continued Grosket, ‘and she left a child — a daughter; *mine* was a daughter too.’

Rust started from a state of actual torpor; every energy every faculty, every feeling leaping into life.

‘That daughter is now alive,’ continued Grosket, speaking slowly, that every word might tell with tenfold force. ‘That daughter now is — what you drove my child to be — a harlot.’

‘It’s false as hell!’ shouted Rust, in a tone that made the room ring. ‘It’s false!’

‘It’s true. I can prove it; prove it, clear as the noon-day,’ returned Grosket, with a loud, exulting laugh.

‘Oh! Enoch! oh, Enoch!’ said Rust, in a broken, supplicating tone, ‘tell me that it’s false, and I’ll bless you! Crush me, blight me, do what you will, only tell me that my own loved child is pure from spot or stain! Tell me so, I beseech you; *I*, Michael Rust, who never begged a boon before — *I* beseech you.’

He fell on his knees in front of Grosket, and clasping his hands together, raised them toward him.

‘I cannot,’ replied Grosket, coldly, ‘for it’s as true as that there is a heaven above us!’

Rust made an effort to speak; his fingers worked convulsively, and he fell prostrate on the floor.

CHAPTER XXII.

It was not the failure of his plans, nor the dread of detection, which broke Rust down. He had been prepared for that, and had nerved himself to meet it; but it was a blow coming from a quarter where he had not dreamed of harm, and wounding him where alone he could feel a pang, that crushed him. There was something so abject in the prostration of that iron-willed man, who had often endured what would have wrung the very souls of other men, without exhibiting any other feeling than contempt, that for a moment awed even the hard man who had struck the blow. In proportion as Rust's control over his emotions had been great, so now the reaction was terrible. He seemed paralyzed in body and mind. No cry escaped him, but his breath rattled as he drew it; his long hair hung loosely over his face and upon the floor; his eyes were closed; his features livid and distorted; and but for his struggling breath, and the spasmodic jerking of his fingers, he seemed dead.

'Lift him up, Bill,' said Grosket, in a subdued tone. 'It's been too much for him. Who'd have thought he had a heart?'

Jones smiled grimly, as he said: 'I'm glad you did it, Mr. Grosket. It was better than murdering him. He was n't afeard of dying. Is it a fit he's got?'

Without waiting for a reply, he placed his arms under him and raised him up. Rust lay heavily against him, his head falling back, and his arms dangling at his side. They carried him to the bench, and placed him on it, Grosket standing behind him and supporting his back.

'I guess he's done for,' said Jones, pushing the hair from his face. 'Pity it was n't three days ago — that's all.'

'Get some water or brandy,' said Grosket; 'I suppose we may as well bring him to. It would be an ugly business if he should die on our hands.'

Jones stooped down, and picking up his great-coat, commenced fumbling in his pocket, and drew out the bottle from which he and Craig had drunk, as they were starting on their expedition the previous night. He held it up and looked at it, then muttered: 'It's no use; it's no use.'

'What are you talking about there?' demanded Grosket impatiently; 'is it empty?'

Jones shook it.

'No; there's a drop or two in it. D — n him! I do n't like his drinking out of this bottle, I do n't; I use it myself; and blow me, if I do n't think his mouth 'ud p'ison it!'

Grosket cut his scruples short by taking the bottle from him, uncorking it, and pouring its contents into Rust's mouth.

'It's a waste,' muttered Jones, eyeing his proceedings with a very dissatisfied look. 'I begrudged it to poor Tim; and cuss *him*, it's going down *his* gullet! I hope it'll choke him.'

Grosket paid no attention to him, but supported Rust, occasionally shaking him, by way of restoring his consciousness. Either the liquor or the shaking had an effect; for the deadly paleness gradually disappeared from his face; his breath grew less short; and finally he sat up and looked about him. His eye was wandering and vacant, and sad and heart-broken indeed was his tone.

'My own dear child!' said he, in a voice so mild and winning, and so teeming with fondness, that none would have recognized it as Rust's. 'I've had a strange dream, my

poor little Mary, about you — *you*, whom I have garnered up in my heart of hearts.'

His voice sank until his words were unintelligible, and then he laughed feebly, and passed his hand backward and forward in the air, as if caressing the head of a child. 'Your eyes are very bright, my little girl, but they beam with happiness; and so they shall, always. So they shall — so they shall. Kiss me, my own darling!' He extended his arms and drew them toward him, as if they enfolded the child, and then bending down his cheek, rocked to and fro, and sang a song, such as is used in lulling an infant to sleep.

'My God! He's clean gone mad!' said Jones, staring at him with starting eyes. 'Dished and done up in ten minutes! That's what I call going to Bedlam by express.'

Although Grosket uttered not a word of comment, his keen gray eye, bright as a diamond; his puckered brows; his compressed lips, and his hands tightly clasped together, showed that he viewed his work with emotions of the most powerful kind. At length he said, in a low tone, as if communing with himself rather than addressing the only person who seemed capable of hearing him: 'If he goes mad, he'll spoil my scheme. He'll not reap the whole harvest that I have sown for him. He must live; ay, and in his sane mind, to feel its full bitterness. *I, I* have lived,' said he, striking his breast; '*I* have borne up against the same curse that now is on him. *I* have had the same feeling gnawing at my heart, giving me no rest, no peace. *He* must suffer. He *must* not take refuge from himself in madness. He *shall* not,' said he, savagely. 'Who would have thought that the flint which the old fellow carries in his breast and calls his heart, had feeling in it?'

Whether these remarks reached Rust's ear, or whether it was that his mind, after the first shock of the intelligence

was over, was beginning to rally, is a matter of doubt ; but from some cause or other, he suddenly discontinued his singing, passed his hand across his forehead, held his long hair back from his face, and stared about him ; his eye wandering from Grosket to Jones, and around the room, and then resting on the floor. He sat for some time looking steadfastly down, his face gradually regaining its stern, unbending character ; his thin lips compressing themselves until his mouth had assumed its usual expression of bitterness, mingled with resolution.

The two men watched, without speaking, the progress of this metamorphosis. At last he rose, and turning to Grosket, said in a calm voice :

‘ You ’ve done your worst ; yet you see Michael Rust can bear it ; ’ and then bowing to him, he said : ‘ Good-bye, Enoch. Whatever may have happened to *my* child, *I* am blameless. *I* never sold her happiness to gratify my avarice. If she has become what Enoch’s child was, the sin does not lie at *my* door. I do n’t know how it is with *you*. ’

Turning to Jones, he said, in the same quiet tone : ‘ Murderer of your bosom-friend, good-bye. ’ The door closed, and he was gone.

A bitter execration from each of the two men followed him. From Jones, it burst forth in unbridled fury, and he sprang forward to avenge the taunt, but was withheld by Grosket, who grasped his arm, then as suddenly relinquished his hold, and said :

‘ Quick ! quick ! Jones. Drag him back ! It concerns your safety and my plans to get him back. ’

The man dashed to the door and down the stairs. In a moment he reappeared :

‘ It’s too late. He’s in the street. ’

‘Curse it! that was a blunder! We should have searched him. He carries all his papers with him.’

But almost at the same moment he seemed to overcome his vexation, for he said :

‘Well, it can’t be helped, so there’s no use in grumbling about it. And now, Bill Jones,’ said he, turning to the other, ‘you know what you’ve done, and who set you on. So do I. He’s worse than you are. If you were he, I’d arrest you on the spot. As it is, I say you had better make yourself scarce. Your neck is in danger; for although the death of Tim, if the rumor is true, was accidental——’

‘It was, it *was*, Mr. Grosket,’ interrupted Jones. ‘D — n it, if it was Rust, if it was *only* him, I would n’t mind it. I’d die myself, to see *him* swing.’

‘Well, hear me,’ continued Grosket. ‘You were committing a felony when you killed Craig, and his death, although accidental, is murder. I’m no lawyer, but I know *that*. You must run for it.’

‘I’d cuss all danger,’ said Jones, gnawing his lip, ‘if I could only lug Rust in it too.’

‘Well, well,’ returned Grosket, ‘you must take your own course; but remember I’ve warned you. You have some good traits about you, Bill, and that’s more than Rust has. Good-bye!’ He extended his hand to the burglar. Jones grasped it eagerly.

‘Thank you! thank you, Mr. Grosket,’ said he, the tears starting to his eyes. ‘If you only knew how I was brought up, how I suffered, what has made me what I am, you would n’t think so hard of me as some do. But there is blood on me now: that’s worse than all. I’ll never get over *that*. I might, if it was n’t Tim’s. Good-bye. God bless ye, Mr. Grosket! My blessing won’t do you much good, but it can’t hurt you.’

Grosket shook his hand, and left the room ; and the desperate man whom he left, melted by a transient word of kindness, which had found its way to his rugged heart, buried his face in his hands, and wept.

Once in the street, Rust endeavored to bear up against his fortune. But he could not. His mind wandered, and all his thoughts were strange, fantastic, and shadowy. He paused ; dashed his hand impatiently against his forehead, and endeavored to shake off the spell. No, no ! it would not leave him. Failure in his schemes ! dishonor to his child ! He could think of them, and of *them* only. Once on this theme, his mind became more bewildered than ever ; and yielding himself to its impulses, he fell into a slow pace, and sauntered on, with his chin bent down on his breast.

From the thickly-settled parts of the town he went on, until he came to streets where the bustle and crowd were less ; then to others, which were nearly deserted ; then on he went, until he reached a quarter where the houses stood far apart, with vacant lots between them. Still he kept on. Then came fields, and cottages, and farm-houses, surrounded by tall trees. Still on he went, still wading through a mass of chaotic fancies, springing up, and reeling and flitting through his mind ; shadows of things that had been, and might be ; ghosts of the past ; prophets of the future. He had become a very child. At last he stood on the bank of the river ; and then for the first time he seemed to awaken from his trance.

It was a glorious day, whose sunshine might have found its way even into his black heart. Oh ! how soft, and mellow, and pure, the hurricane of the last night had left it ! Not a cloud in the sky, not a breath to ripple the water, or

to wave the long trailing locks of the hoary willows which nodded over its banks.

Rust looked about him with a bewildered gaze, until his eye became fixed upon the water. 'It's very quiet, *very* quiet,' said he; 'I wonder if a man, once engulfed in it, feels peace.' He pressed his hand to his breast, and muttered: '*Here* it is gone for ever!'

He loitered listlessly on, under the trees. His step was feeble; and he stooped and tottered, as if decrepit. He stopped again, shook his head, and went on, looking upon the ground, and at times long and wistfully at the river.

An old man, leaning on a stout cane, who had been watching him, at last came up. Raising his hat as he did so, he said:

'You seem, like myself, to be an admirer of this noble river.'

Rust looked up at him sharply, ready to gather in his energies, if necessary. But there was nothing in the mild, dignified face of the speaker to invite suspicion, and he replied in a feeble tone:

'Yes, yes; it is a noble river.'

'I've seen many, in my long life,' said the other, 'and have never met its equal.'

Rust paused, as if he did not hear him, and then continued in a musing tone:

'How smooth it is! how calm! Many have found peace there, who never found it in life. Drowning's an easy death, I'm told.'

The stranger replied gravely, and even sternly:

'They have escaped the troubles of life, and plunged into those of eternity;' and then, as if willing to give Rust an opportunity of explaining away the singular character of the remark, he said: 'I hope *you* do not meditate suicide?'

‘No,’ replied Rust, quietly, ‘not at present; but I’ve often thought that many a wrecked spirit will find *there* what it never found on earth — peace.’

‘The body may,’ returned the other, ‘but not the soul.’

Rust smiled doubtfully, and walked off. The man watched, and even followed him; but seeing him turn from the river, he took another direction, occasionally pausing to look back. Not so Rust. From the time he had parted with the stranger, he had forgotten him, and his thoughts wandered back to their old theme. It was strange that he should believe so implicitly Grosket’s tale, coming as it did from one whom he knew hated him. Yet he *did* believe it. There was proof of its truth in Grosket’s manner; in his look; in his tone of assured triumph. Yet, although Rust brooded over nothing else that livelong day, he could not realize it; he could not appreciate how desolate and lonely he was. He could only fancy what life would be, if what Grosket had told him *had* happened. ‘This is not all a dream, I suppose,’ muttered he, pausing as he went, and passing his hand across his forehead. ‘No, no; I’m awake — wide awake; and *I* am Michael Rust; that’s more strange than all.’

After hours of wandering, he found himself at his office, ascended the stairs, opened the door, and went in. It was dark, for the lights had been blazing in the shop-windows before he left the street; but he sat down without observing it; and there he remained until Kornicker came in with a light.

Rust made no reply to the salutation which he received. Kornicker placed the light on the table; and after loitering round the room, and busying himself with a few papers which he had arranged on the table, to give it a business-like appearance, he asked:

‘Do you want me any more to-night?’

‘No ; you may go.’

The dismissal and departure of Mr. Kornicker were almost simultaneous. His heavy foot went thumping from step to step, and finally the street-door banged shut after him. Rust sat without moving, listening to every tramp of his heavy foot, until the door shut it out.

‘So, he’s gone,’ said he, drawing a long breath, and cuddling himself up on his chair. ‘He’ll be in my way no more to-night.’

He shivered slightly ; and then got up and drew his chair nearer to the grate, although there was no fire in it. ‘And *this* is then the end of all my schemes,’ muttered he ; ‘I have gone on for years in the same beaten track, fighting off all who could interfere with me. The affection of those who would have loved me — friends, relatives, those nearest to me, with the same blood in our veins, nursed in the same arms, who drew life from the same source — this cold heart has repulsed, until they have all abandoned me !’

He leaned his head on his hands, and tears, scalding tears, gushed from his eyes. ‘I did it for *her*. It was to get gold to lavish on *her*. I would have chained myself for life to that old man’s daughter, to get wealth ; I would have added the destruction of those children to the catalogue of my crimes, that I might have grasped their inheritance, to have showered all that I had gathered by toil and crime upon *her*. She was my hope, my pride, my own dear darling child ; but she is shipwrecked now ; she has withered my heart. I would have shed its last blood for her. I would — I *would* ; indeed I would ! But it’s useless to think of it. She can never be what she was ; the bright, pure-souled, spotless child whom I worshipped. Yes, yes ; I *did* worship her ! Why deny it ? Better, far better she had died, for

then I might still have cherished her memory. It's too late now. She's become a castaway.'

He paused. From a state of deep and querulous despondency, he gradually recovered composure; then his mood grew sterner and sterner; until his compressed lips and flashing eye showed that he had passed from one extreme to the other.

'Is there nothing left to live for?' exclaimed he; '*nothing* left? One thing can yet be done. I must ascertain her disgrace beyond a doubt. Then atonement can and shall be made, or *he* had better never have been born!'

Rust stood up, with an expression of bold, honest indignation, such as he had rarely worn, stamped on every feature. '*This* must be accomplished,' said he. 'Every thing else must be abandoned; *this* done, let me die; for I cannot love her as I did, and I might hate her. Better die!'

CHAPTER XXIII.

RICHARD HOLMES, Esq., was sitting in his office, two days after the events narrated in the last chapter, with his nose within a few inches of a law-book which rested on his knees, when he was aroused by the opening of the door, and the entrance of a man. Holmes was so much out of the world, and out of the current of business, that he did what a practitioner at the bar of his age and standing rarely does; that is, he looked up without waiting till he was addressed.

'Ah, Harson! — it's you, is it?' said he, laying aside his book, but without rising.

Harry walked up, shook hands with him, and seated himself.

'We've been hard at work, and have made some progress,' said he, taking off his hat, and placing it on the table. 'We've got the woman.'

'What woman?'

'Blossom,' replied Harson; 'I've brought her here to answer for herself. She was in Rust's employ, and received the children from him. She's below.'

'What news of the boy?' inquired Holmes.

'All right; Grosket has him. Would you like to see the woman?'

'It would be as well,' said Holmes, drumming on the table. 'We'll hear what she has to say. Does she communicate what she knows willingly, or under compulsion?'

'She's not very talkative,' answered Harson, 'and seems terribly afraid of Rust.'

'I think we can squeeze the truth out of her,' replied Holmes. 'Bring her up.'

Harrison went out, and in a few minutes reappeared with Mrs. Blossom. The lawyer pointed to a chair, into which the lady sank, apparently in a state of great exhaustion and agitation; for she moaned, and rocked to and fro, and wrung her hands.

'Your name's Blossom, I think,' said Holmes, evincing no sympathy whatever with her sufferings.

'Ah's me! ah's me! I'm very old! I'm very old!' exclaimed the lady in a moaning tone, but without making any reply to the question.

'Hark ye,' said Holmes, in a stern tone, 'I have not sent for you, to be trifled with. You have come here to disclose the deeds of a scoundrel; and disclose them you *must*. You shall answer all my questions, truly, honestly, and without equivocation, or it will be the worse for you. I am aware of offences committed by you, which, if punished as they merit, would send you to prison. I tell you this, that you may know exactly how we stand with reference to each other. If you wish to serve yourself, you will find true and prompt replies to whatever I ask. What's your name?'

Mrs. Blossom oscillated in her chair, glanced at the wall, replied 'Blossom,' and buried her face in a rag of a shawl.

'Good! Where do you live?' demanded the lawyer. The woman answered, and Holmes wrote it down.

'Do you know a man by the name of Michael Rust?'

Mrs. Blossom's chair became very uneasy, and she was seized with a violent cough. The lawyer waited until her cough was better, and repeated the question, accompanying it by a look which produced an answer in the affirmative.

'What other name did you ever know him to bear?'

Mrs. Blossom suddenly found her voice, and replied

boldly : 'No other ;' and here she spoke the truth ; for although Rust had at last been obliged to disclose to her his assumed name, yet he had trusted her no farther than was absolutely necessary.

'How long have you known him ?'

Mrs. Blossom again lost her voice, but found it instantly on meeting the eye of Holmes ; and she answered bluntly :

'About four years.'

'What led to your acquaintance ?'

The woman cast a shrewd suspicious glance at him, as if calculating how far she might trifle with impunity : but there was something in his manner that was not encouraging, and she replied, 'that she could not remember.'

Holmes laid down his pen, and pushing back his chair so that he faced her, said, in a quiet but very decided manner :

'Mrs. Blossom, you have been brought here for the purpose of giving us such information as will enable us to do justice to a person who has been greatly injured by this man Rust. I mention this, not because I suppose the motive will have any great weight with you, but to let you see that the object of our investigation is nothing against yourself. Your answers are important to us ; for at present we know no other than yourself, of whom we can obtain the information we require. I do not conceal this, nor will I conceal the fact that, unless you *do* answer me, you shall leave this room for a prison. I told you so before ; I repeat it now ; I will *not* repeat it a third time. I already know enough of the matter on which I am interrogating you, to be able to detect falsehood in your answers.'

There was something either in the words of the lawyer or in the formation of her chair that caused Mrs. Blossom to sit very uneasily, and at the same time to cast a glance behind her, as if there existed a strong connection between

her thoughts and the door. She was, however, used to trying circumstances, and did not lose her presence of mind. She made no reply, but sat with every faculty, which long training had sharpened to a high degree of cunning, on the alert; but she was not a little taken by surprise when Holmes, after taking from the table a packet of papers, selected one, and having spent a few minutes in examining it, said to her:

‘To convince you that we are perfectly acquainted with the nature of your dealings with Rust, I will enter into a few details, which may perhaps enable you to recollect something more. Four years since, on the sixteenth of December, a man by the name of Blossom, with whom you lived, and whose name you bear, although you are not his wife, proposed to you to take charge of two children, a boy and girl. At first you refused, but finally agreed to do it on receiving five hundred dollars, and the assurance that no inquiry would be made as to the treatment they received at your hands, and that whether they lived or died was a matter of indifference to the person who placed them in your charge, and would not be too closely investigated. The children came. They were quite young. You had them for a week, and were then informed that they must go, for a time, to the country. You asked no questions, but gave them up, and they were sent away, the money for their support being furnished by the same hand that threw them upon your mercy. In a year or so they were brought back, and were again intrusted to you, with instructions to break them down, and, if possible, to send them to their graves; but if their bodies were proof against cruelty, *then* so to pollute their very souls, and familiarize them with crime, that they should forget what they had been; and that even those who should have loved them best would blush to see what they were. You began your work well, for you had a stern,

savage master over you — Michael Rust. 'Thus much,' said he, 'I know; but I must know more. You must identify the children as the same first delivered to you by Rust. You must disclose the names of the persons with whom they lived in the country. You must also give me such information as will enable us to fasten this crime on Rust. Another person could have proved all this — the man Blossom; but you know he is dead.'

He paused, for Mrs. Blossom's face grew deadly pale as he spoke. It was momentary, however; and might have passed away entirely, had not a strange suspicion fastened itself on his mind. He added, in a slow tone:

'What ailed him, *you* know best.'

Mrs. Blossom's thin lips grew perfectly white, and moved as if she were attempting to speak.

'Will you give me the information I require? or will you accept the alternative?' said Holmes, still keeping his eye upon her.

'Go on; what do you want?' demanded she, in a quick, husky voice.

'You are acquainted with Michael Rust?'

'I am,' replied she, in the same quick, nervous manner.

'How did you first become acquainted with him?'

'You know all that,' was the abrupt reply. 'Why should I go over it again? It's all true, as you said it.'

'Did he ever go by any other name than Rust?'

'He never told me any name at all,' said the woman, 'and threatened my life if I found any out; but I did — I did. It was Rust! Michael Rust!'

'Any other name?' inquired Holmes.

The woman shook her head. 'None!'

Holmes paused to make a note of it, and then asked:

‘What is the name of the person, in the country, who took charge of the children?’

‘I do n’t know,’ replied the woman. ‘Michael Rust sent a man for them, who took them off.’

‘Who was this man?’

‘I do n’t know; I never saw him. Mr. Blossom gave the children to him, and never told me his name.’

‘Good,’ said Holmes, in his short, abrupt manner. ‘Where are these children now?’

‘One’s at *his* house,’ replied she, pointing to Harson. ‘The other, by this time, is with a man named Grosket. He’s been arter him, and I suppose has got him by this time.’

‘Enoch Grosket?’ inquired Holmes.

The woman nodded. ‘I told him where he’d find him. He went straight off to fetch him.’

‘Will you swear that they are the same children brought to you four years since?’ said Holmes, pausing in his writing, and running his eye over the notes which he had made. ‘Do you know them to be the same?’

‘The man said so, who brought ’em back at the end of the year. That’s all I know about it. They never left me arter that.’

‘Who was that man?’

‘Tim Craig,’ replied the woman; ‘but he didn’t know that Mr. Rust had any thing to do with them then. He thought it was Grosket.’

‘Tim Craig! and he’s dead. The only person who could reveal their place of concealment during that year, and the name of those who had the care of them. The chain is broken, by which to identify them as the lost children of George Colton. Who can aid us in this?’

‘I CAN!’ said a voice.

All three started; for there, at their very elbow, stood Michael Rust; but Rust, fearfully altered, worn down, wan, haggard, with sunken cheeks, and features rigid and colorless. But, wrecked as he was, there was still that strange sneering smile on his lip, which seemed as if only parting to utter sarcasm and mockery. But now he was serious in his mood, for he repeated:

‘I can; and without my aid, the secret must be a secret for ever.’

Holmes rose, angrily, from his seat.

‘What brought *you* here?’ demanded he.

‘Be seated, I beg of you,’ said Rust, bowing, and speaking in a low, mocking tone. ‘What brought me here? *You* called upon *me*, I think; it was but civil to return the visit. I have come to do so.’

‘This is idle, Sir,’ replied Holmes, coldly. ‘You came for some purpose. Name it. The sooner this interview is over, the more agreeable I suppose it will be for both of us.’

‘For me, certainly,’ said Rust, in a manner so constrained and different from his usual one, that the lawyer was in doubt whether he was in jest or earnest. Then he added, in a bitter tone: ‘You ask what brought me here. Destiny, folly, revenge perhaps against my own heart’s blood. Call it what you will; here I am; and ready to clear up the very matter which now perplexes you. What more do you want?’

Holmes replied, with a sarcastic smile: ‘The assistance of Michael Rust is likely to be as great as his sincerity. We certainly should place great reliance on it.’

Rust, perfectly unmoved by the taunt, answered in a tone so bitter, so full of hatred to himself, so replete with the out-

pouring of a cankered heart, so despairing and reckless, that the lawyer felt that even in him there might be some truth:

‘I care not whether you trust me or not; I care not whether you believe me or not. If Michael Rust could ever have been swayed by the opinions of others, it would have been before this; it’s too late to begin now. I came here because I have failed in all I undertook; because I am beginning to hate the one for whom I have toiled, until I grew gray with the wearing away of mind and body; because the soul of life is gone. I do it out of revenge against that person. It is not remorse; it is not conscience; but it’s revenge. Look at me: that person has blasted me. Do I not show it in every feature and limb? Now you understand me. My schemes are abandoned; and I shall soon be where neither man nor law can reach me. My secret can do me no good; why should I keep it? Perhaps the recollection of past days and of past favors from one whom I have wronged, may have had its weight; perhaps not. I’ve come to tell the truth. If you will hear it, well; if not, I go, and it goes with me.’

Holmes and Harson exchanged looks, and Harson nodded, as if in acquiescence to some proposition which he supposed the looks of the other to indicate.

‘Well, Sir,’ replied Holmes, ‘we will hear what you have to say.’

‘Stop,’ said Rust; ‘before uttering a word, I must have a promise.’

The lawyer looked at him, and then at Harson, as much as to say: ‘I expected it. There’s some trick in it.’

Rust observed it, and said: ‘Spare your suspicions; I have come here to be frank and honest in word and deed; and Michael Rust can be so, when the fancy seizes him. The promise I require is this: whatever I may reveal, no

matter what the penalty, you will not set the blood-hounds of the law on my track within forty-eight hours. I have yet one act to perform in the great farce of life. *That* accomplished, you may do your worst.'

'This is all very strange,' said Holmes, eyeing the thin, excited features of his visitor, as if not altogether sure of his sanity. 'If you fear the punishment of your misdeeds, why reveal them? Why place yourself in our power, or run the risk of our interfering with your future movements?'

Rust replied bitterly: 'You shall hear. My whole life has been spent for one person — my own child. Every faculty of mind and body has been devoted to her, and every crime I have committed was to promote her interest. Scruples were disregarded; ties of blood set at defiance; every thing that binds man to man, that deters from wrong, were disregarded, if they stood in the way of that one grand aim of life. *She* forgot all! She has broken me down, heart and spirit. Love and devotion were crushed with them, and revenge has sprung up from their ruins. Ay! revenge against my own child! Should any thing prevent my doing what I have yet to do, and should my brother die, and his children not be found, *she* would be his heir. *I* would have labored and *succeeded* for one who has disgraced me, and made me what you see me!'

He stretched out his thin hands, displaying the large veins coursing beneath the skin, and apparently full to bursting. 'How wasted they are!' He smiled as he looked at them, and then asked: 'Will you promise?'

The lawyer turned to Harson, and then said: 'I promise; do you, Harson?' Harry nodded.

'Good!' said Rust abruptly. 'You know my name, and much of my history. All the facts which you detailed to me at my office a short time since are true — true almost to the

very letter. Michael Rust and Henry Colton are one. The plodding, scheming, heartless, unprincipled Henry Colton, who could sell his brother's own flesh and blood for gold; who could forget all the kindnesses heaped upon him, and stab his benefactor, and this wreck of Michael Rust, are one!

He struck his hand against his chest, and strode up and down the room. '*He* was rich, and *I* was poor: he gave me the means of living, but I wanted more. I had my eye on his entire wealth, and I wanted him to be in his grave. But he thwarted me in that. Feeble and sickly, so that a breath might have destroyed him, he lived on; and at last, as if to balk me farther, he married. Two children were born; two more obstacles between me and my aim. Two children! — two more of the same blood for me to love. Ho! ho! how Michael Rust loved those babes!' exclaimed he, clutching his fingers above his head, and gasping as he spoke. He turned, and fastening his glaring eye on the lawyer, gripped his fingers together, with his teeth hard set, and speaking through them, said in a sharp whisper: 'I could have strangled them!'

He paused; and then went on: 'At last came the thought of removing them. At first it was vague; it came like a shadow, and went off; then it came again, and more distinct. Then it became stronger and stronger, until it grew into a passion — a very madness. At last my mind was made up, and my plans formed. I trusted no one, but carried them off myself, and delivered them to the husband of that woman,' pointing to Mrs. Blossom. 'I told him nothing of their history: he was paid to take charge of them, and asked no questions. Then came the clamor of pursuit. I daily met and comforted my broken-hearted brother and his wife; I held out hopes which I knew were false; I offered rewards;

I turned pursuit in every direction except the right one. They both thanked me, and looked upon me as their best friend; and so I was, for I kept up hope; and what is life without it? At last the search approached the neighborhood where the children really were, and they were sent to the country. The only person who aided me was Enoch Grosket. I told him, however, nothing respecting the history of the children, nor where they went; but he found it out afterwards.'

'Where was it?' inquired Holmes, anxiously, 'and to whom did you send them?'

'I have prepared it all,' said Rust: he drew a letter from his pocket and handed it to him. 'You'll find it there, and the names of the persons; they know nothing of the children; but they can identify them as those left with them four years ago; and they still have the clothes which they wore at the time; but the girl's resemblance to her mother will save all that trouble.'

He paused, with his dark eyes fastened on the floor, and his lips working with intense emotion.

'And is it possible that the love of gold can lead one to crimes like these!' said Holmes, in a subdued tone.

'Love of gold!' exclaimed Rust, fiercely; 'what cared I for gold? Ho! ho! Michael Rust values gold but as dross: but it is the world; the cringing, obsequious, miser-hearted world, which kisses the very feet of wealth, that set Michael Rust on; it was this that lashed him forward; but not for himself. I married a woman whom I loved,' said he, in a quick, stern tone; 'she abandoned me and became an outcast, and paid the penalty by an outcast's fate: she died in the streets. The love which I bore her I transferred to my child. I was poor, and I resolved that she should be rich. Can you understand my motive now? I loved my own

flesh and blood better than my brother's. I have now relinquished my plans, and have told you why.'

A pause of some moments ensued, and Rust said: 'Is there any thing more that you want? If so, tell me at once, for after to-day we shall never meet again.'

Holmes ran his eye over the papers, and selecting two letters, handed them to Rust, and said:

'How do you account for the difference of that handwriting, if Michael Rust and Henry Colton are one?'

Michael Rust wrote one hand, Henry Colton another,' said Rust; 'but *I* wrote both.' He seized a pen, wrote a few words, signed the names Michael Rust and Henry Colton, and flung it on the table. 'The game had been well studied before it was played.'

'Your writing is well disguised indeed,' said the lawyer, comparing it with the letters; 'it solves that difficulty.'

'Any thing else?' demanded Rust, impatiently; 'my time is limited.'

Holmes shook his head; but Harrison said: 'A few words about Jacob Rhoneland.'

'Well?'

'You accuse him of forgery; what does that mean?'

'He was a fool. I wanted to marry his daughter; I represented myself to him as very rich, to tempt his avarice; that failed. I added entreaties; *they* failed. Then I tried the effect of fear. He yielded to that for a time, but at last he overcame even that.'

'And the tale?'

'Was well fabricated, but false.'

'And Ned Somers?'

'I had to get rid of him: what could I do while he was dallying round the girl? I *did* get rid of him: a few lies whispered to the old man sent him adrift. But I'm tired

of this ; I came to tell what I pleased, and nothing more, and I must be at work. You must respect your promise,' said he, turning to Holmes.

'I shall, and I hope your present errand at least is an honest one.'

'It is,' said Rust, with a strange smile ; 'it is to punish a criminal.' He opened the door and went off without another word.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HARRY HARSON strode into his own house, with his jolly face brimful of cheerfulness. It shone out of his eyes; out of the corners of his half-closed mouth; and even out of his full, round double chin. Every part of him seemed glowing with it; and no sooner had he got in his parlor, than he flung his hat on the table; snapped his fingers in perfect ecstasy; made the hazardous experiment of a pirouette around the table, and concluded his performances by making two or three passes with his cane at the nose of Spite, who had been watching his conduct with an air of extreme surprise, not unmingled with disapprobation. The attack upon himself was carrying the joke too far; and after several ineffectual attempts to avoid the point of the cane, with a discontented grumble, between a whine and a growl, the dog retreated under an old side-board, troubled with sad misgivings as to the state of his master's intellect.

'Ha, ha! old pup! you do n't understand the science of fence; but do n't take it hard. I've got a drop of comfort in store for you; for we're to have a blow-out, Spite—a real, regular, out-and-out blow-out—ha! ha! And you shall be under the table during the whole of it,' exclaimed Harson, rubbing his hands together, and chuckling with indescribable glee. 'I'll speak about it at once.' He opened the door and bawled out, in a voice that made the old house shake: 'Hallo there! Martha, Martha, come here, quick!'

A frantic rush across the kitchen was heard, succeeded by a violent clatter of slip-shod shoes through the entry; for

Martha, since the late burglary, being haunted in idea by shabby-looking gentlemen with pistols in their pockets, and dark lanterns under their arms, even in broad daylight, was on the look-out for emergencies, and had every thing ready for speedy egress to the street, either through the front door or the cellar window ; and the tone of Harson's voice, being that of a man in extremity, had such an effect upon her, that when she reached the door, she could only gasp out :

‘ Lor’ me ! is they here ag’in ? ’

‘ Who ? ’ demanded Harson, not a little surprised at the pale face of his housekeeper.

‘ The robbers. ’

‘ Poh, poh, nonsense ! ’ replied he, perhaps a little annoyed by the reflection that his own manner had contributed to her mistake. ‘ There are no greater thieves here than our two selves. Perhaps I *did* speak rather loud ; but I was not thinking of what I was about. I shall have some friends to dine with me to-morrow, and you must get things ready for them. There may be six, or eight, or a dozen ; damme ! I do n’t know how many ; but have enough for twenty ; d ’ ye hear ? ’

Martha curtseyed, at the same time intimating, in a faint tone, that she *did* hear ; for she had not entirely recovered from the embarrassment attendant on the precipitancy of her advent into his presence.

‘ And hark ye ! ’ continued Harson, warming as he went on ; ‘ Frank ’s the very Devil and all ; we ’ll tap the cask in the corner of the cellar. It ’s prime stuff, which I ’ve kept for some great occasion ; and this is a glorious one. And there ’s the fat saddle of mutton hanging in the store-room : we ’ll have that. It ’ll be the very thing for the half-starved boy we ’ve found ; and bring down a bottle or two of the red-seal wine ; that of 1812. It ’ll wake up old Dick

Holmes, and make him ten years younger. There's no fear of giving *him* the gout. Ha, ha! Dick Holmes with the gout! I'd like to see that!' exclaimed he, bursting out into a broad laugh at the bare idea. 'Well, well,' added he, after a minute's consideration, 'you may go, Martha. Upon the whole, I think I'll get the things myself, and go to market too. There, that's all.'

Harson's spirits, however, were too exuberant to permit him to remain quiet; for after he had returned to the room, drawn a chair to the fire, thrown on a few sticks of wood, seated himself with a foot on each andiron, folded his hands complacently over his abdomen, and fixed his eyes upon the clock, as if it were a settled thing that he was to retain this attitude for at least an hour, or perhaps a year, he suddenly started up, thrust his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, and walked up and down the room, whistling with all his might; but even by whistling, he was unable to work off his surplus of buoyancy. It was evidently gaining ground upon him, do what he would. He had reached his present state by rapid stages. From a feeling of complacency he had passed to one of high satisfaction; from that to one of mirthfulness; thence he advanced rapidly to one of joviality; and he was now fast verging upon one of uproariousness. Something must be done! Excessive steam bursts a boiler; why should not a similar excess of delight burst a man? He would n't risk it! He must find some vent for it. Ha! ha! It just occurred to him that the widow had n't heard the news. He clapped on his hat, seized his cane, and sallied out into the street, in his haste shutting in Spite, who had started to follow him, and who yelped mournfully for an hour afterward, to the great dissatisfaction of a thin maiden lady who resided next door, and was indulging herself in a nervous headache.

There must have been something in the expression of Harrison's face which bore the stamp of his feelings; for as he trudged along, with a free, independent air, striding as lustily as if only twenty instead of sixty years had passed over his head, and as if every sinew were as well strung, and every muscle as firm as ever; not a few turned to take a second look at his hearty, honest face; for such an one was not often met with; and as they did so, observed: 'There goes a jolly old cock!'

Rap! rap! rap! went the head of his cane against the door of Mrs. Chowles's blinking old house; but he was too much at home to think of waiting for a reply, and had gone through the ceremony only for the purpose of removing from his entrance all appearance of being underhanded or surreptitious; for no sooner had he knocked with one hand, than with the other he raised the latch and walked without hesitation toward the widow's little parlor.

'Ah, ha! my visit will be a surprise to her!' thought he, as he took the knob of the door in his hand. He was a true prophet. A faint scream escaped the lady, for she was opening the door to come out at the very moment he was doing the same to enter; and as the movements of both were rapid, the lady precipitated herself into his arms, which in a most unexpected manner closed about her, while three hearty smacks were deposited on her forehead before she well knew where she was.

'Mr. Harrison!' exclaimed she, extricating herself, though without any appearance of anger; 'is it you?'

'By Jove, I believe it is!' replied Harrison. 'If it is n't, it's some gay fellow of twenty or thereabout, for I have n't been so young for thirty years as I am to-day.'

Mrs. Chowles saw from his manner, and knew from the unusual hour of his visit, that there was something on his

mind which he had come to communicate; and as she was not of that class who take pleasure in keeping others in suspense, especially when she was liable to be a fellow-sufferer, she drew an easy-chair to the fire, and taking a seat in another, said: 'Sit down, Harry. Now, what is it? what ails you?'

'What ails me?' exclaimed her visitor, turning his joyous countenance to her; 'look at me. Don't you see what a boy I've grown; how the wrinkles have gone from my cheeks, and how clear and bright my eye is! Look at me, from top to toe. See how jolly I am, and hear how loud and lusty my laugh is: Ha! ha! ha!'

The lady *did* look at him; and *did* observe all the peculiarities to which he called her attention; and *did* listen to his loud ringing laugh; and then, not knowing what to make of him, drew away.

'Aha! widow, you're frightened at finding yourself alone with such a gay fellow!' said he, laughing still more merrily. 'Well, well, don't be alarmed, for I'm not in the least dangerous; and to tell the truth, I am so overjoyed to-day that I may be indulged in a little foolery. But I'll keep you no longer in suspense. You recollect little Annie, the little child who fled to my house for protection?'

'Yes; well?'

'And you remember, too, how often I told you that that poor, starved, cast-off little thing looked to me like one born for a better destiny, and like one who had seen brighter times; and how often you ridiculed me, when I spoke of the faint recollections which still flitted through her mind of sunnier hours; and how you said that they were merely dreams, and that I was almost as great a child as she was, to attach any weight to them; though you admitted — I'll give you credit for that — you *did* admit that she was a

beautiful, good little thing, and worthy to belong to the best in the land. And when I said that Providence never would have sent such a frail being as that into the world as a beggar's brat, you told me, on the contrary, that *He might* have cast the lot of that child, frail, feeble, sickly as she was, amid the very outcasts of the earth for wise purposes which we never could fathom; and that I had no right to reason in that way on the subject, or to comment on *His* doings. And there, widow,' added he solemnly, 'you were right, and I was very wrong. But I was correct in my surmises as to the child. She *was* born for a brighter destiny even than my humble roof; although,' added he, his voice somewhat choked, 'she'll never be where they'll love her more. But it's all right, and she must go; for her parents are discovered. They *are* of the best in the land; she is *not* a beggar's brat. Her brother, too, is found; a miserable, thin, hollow-eyed fellow; but we'll put flesh on him. This is not all,' added he: 'every body seems in luck to-day. Old Jacob Rhoneland has escaped scathless out of Rust's clutches. Rust himself is on his way to the Devil post-haste, and there is nothing left to be done but to heal the breach between Jacob and Ned. This matter settled, I hope to see Kate's cheeks once more plump and round and rosy. I hope not only to *see* them, but to *kiss* them too. I'm not too old to fancy such things, I can tell you. And now, widow, had n't I a right to be a little boisterous? Ah! I see that you think me excusable; but bring me a pipe, and I'll give you all the particulars over that. I'm a little thirsty, too; for I've already told a long story, and have yet a longer one to tell.'

The pipe was produced; the small three-legged table was placed at his side, to support his elbow; and Harson, having carefully lighted his pipe, suffered the smoke to eddy about his nose, while he arranged his ideas and cleared his throat;

and then he entered into a full and faithful detail of the proceedings which had been taken to unmask the villany of Rust, and the various steps and precautions which had finally led to success.

It was a pleasant sight to see two such persons as Harrison and his crony, both in the autumn of life, but with the charities of the heart yet green and unwithered, talking and gossiping together, with eyes bright and beaming with mutual admiration; each fully aware of the foibles of the other, but carefully indulgent to them; for each knew that the heart of the other was an odd casket, encasing a gem of the noblest kind, from which radiated love, charity, and benevolence to man. Oh Harry, Harry! how joyously and yet mildly you looked into that widow's dark liquid eyes; and how gently and confidently she returned that look! What a risk you both ran! Had you and she been but a few years younger; had either of you cherished a whit less tenderly the memory of those who had once been all in all to you, and whose forms were slumbering under the green sod, that widow might have been a wife, and Harry Harrison no longer a stout, sturdy old bachelor; for it cannot be denied that he *did* become a little animated as he proceeded; and that he *did* take the widow's hand in his, and did squeeze it, perhaps with a little too much freedom, and did look into her eyes, as if he loved her with his whole soul and body into the bargain; nor can it be denied that she was pleased with these tokens of esteem, or love, or friendship, or whatever else she might have thought them; for she did not withdraw her hand, and *she* smiled when *he* smiled; and there certainly was a strong sympathy apparent in their looks; and even when in the fervor of his feelings he held his pipe between his teeth to free the hand which held it, and deliberately squeezed *both* of her hands in his, still she

did not appear embarrassed nor vexed; and when he had released it, quietly went on with her sewing, as composedly as if what he had just done was quite usual, and a matter of course.

‘And now, Mrs. Chowles,’ said Harson, as he concluded his narrative; ‘upon the strength of our success we are to have a jollification to-morrow at my house; and we’ll have Dick Holmes there, and Kate, and Ned Somers, and Kate’s father. He must make up with Ned then, if not before. He knows he was wrong, and he must give up.’

‘But will he?’ inquired the widow, anxiously. ‘You know Jacob’s a wrong-headed old man in some things. Will he?’

‘Won’t he?’ ejaculated Harson, with a peculiar wink and nod of satisfaction, as if he were on excellent terms with himself, and understood what he was about perfectly well. ‘I’ll tell you what it is,’ added he, in a more grave tone; ‘Jacob has had his own way, or rather Michael Rust’s way, in this matter, too long. He shall have it no longer. He *shall* not break his child’s heart. I will not permit it.’ He took his pipe from his mouth, and slapped his knee emphatically. ‘Have you observed no change in the girl since then? If *you* have not, *I* have. She is still the same devoted, affectionate child to that warped old man that she always was; but look at her face and form, and listen to her voice. She was once the gayest, merriest little creature that ever lived. It threw sunshine into one’s heart only to look at her; and when she spoke, did you ever hear a bird whose voice was half so joyous? Poor thing! when she laughs now, it makes my heart ache. It’s like the smile of one dying, when he is trying to whisper hope to those who are weeping over his death-bed. God bless her! and how should it be otherwise? But no matter; the worst is past. And

now,' said he, 'I must be gone. I came here to tell you the story, and to ask you to dine with us; and between you and me, perhaps you had better come early in the day, and keep an eye over Martha; for the idea of a dinner-party has quite frightened her; and there are so many little things to be done, which I know nothing about, and which you understand, and without which we should have every thing helter-skelter, that you must come, or I'll never forgive you.' Harry made this last menace with so fierce an air, and his mouth pursed up in so ferocious a manner, although his eyes were dancing with fun, that the lady consented at once.

'It's well for you that you did,' said Harson, rising and putting on his hat; 'if you had n't, I don't know what I should have done; but it would have been something dreadful. I'm a terrible fellow when fairly roused.' Then shaking the lady's hand as if he intended to dislocate her shoulder, he put his cane under his arm and went out.

'Ha! ha! old Jacob! you and I must now have a tussle. Ha! ha!' exclaimed he, still carrying his cane under his arm, and his hands under his coat tails, 'you must hear a little of what I think. A few words of wholesome advice will do you no harm, and will rub off the rust that old age has fastened upon you.'

With this hostile resolution upon his tongue, the old man made the best of his way to Rhoneland's house. Jacob was there, dozing in his chair, with his white locks hanging loosely over his shoulders; and Kate was sitting at his side, engaged in sewing. She was paler than usual; and there was a nervous restlessness in her manner, which did not escape the quick glance of Harson. He thought, too, that she seemed somewhat thinner than she was wont to be. It might be mere suspicion, but still he thought so.

'It's too bad,' muttered he; 'but I'll set matters right, or my name's not Harry Harson.'

There was something in the hearty greeting of the old fellow, as he took her hands in his and called her his bright-eyed girl, so full of happiness, that it was impossible not to catch the same feeling as he spoke; and even Jacob, as he felt the cordial grasp of his hand, assured himself, and assumed something like a cheerful smile.

'Well, Kate,' said Harson, drawing a chair between her and her father; 'I've news for *you*; and for *you* too, my old fellow said as, turning to Rhoneland; 'we've used Rust up

Jacob stared at him, smiled faintly and half doubtfully, and then sank back in his chair without speaking.

'Do you hear me?' exclaimed Harson, seizing him by the collar and shaking him; 'do you hear me? Why don't you jump up and hurrah at the downfall of such a scoundrel? Ha! ha! We've been on his track for months; but we've run him down at last; and then he made a virtue of necessity, and told all — all about the children, and about you, and about Ned; all lies, all lies — every word of them. Ned he swore was as honest a fellow as ever lived, or something to that effect. *You*, he admitted, had committed no forgery; not a word of truth in it; but all invented, to force you to consent to his marriage with my own little sweet-heart, Kate. God bless me! how near I was to losing her! Perhaps you don't know that I intend marrying her myself? Why don't you get up now, and hurrah? Confound it, I never saw such people in all my life. Hallo! by Jove! Kate, quick! some water! I swear, the old fellow has fainted!'

As he spoke, Rhoneland's head fell back, and the color forsook his cheeks. Harson caught him, while Kate ran for

water and brandy, a small quantity of which being poured into his mouth, soon brought him to himself. Having waited until he was sufficiently composed to listen, Harson commenced from the beginning of his story, and detailed to both of his listeners much that they already knew, and not a little which they had never dreamed of; the causes which had first led to the enmity between Grosket and Rust, and then, step by step, what they had done to detect and bring to light his villany. 'Rust manœuvred well and skilfully,' said he, 'for he was a bold, reckless man, who stuck at nothing, and fought to the last. It is doubtful whether he would not have got the better of us in the end, had not a sudden misfortune fallen upon him, which prostrated his energies and broke his hard heart. After that, he was no longer the same man; but confessed every thing, and, among other things, that it had been his intention to become the husband of Kate, to obtain the wealth which he supposed you to possess; and finding that you were opposed to it, he tried the effect of a display of wealth upon you. This failed. Then he resolved to see what fear could do; and threatened to have you indicted for forgery; and admitting that you were innocent, he yet showed so clearly how he could support his charge, and succeed in blasting your character, that you shrank from collision with him: still you would not consent to sacrifice your child, although you dared not give him such an answer as would shut out all hope. There was another obstacle in his way. This was a certain young fellow who, as well as Rust, had an eye on Kate, and whom, perhaps, Kate did not think the worst man in the world. Rust determined to be rid of him; so he basely slandered him to you; and you, not suspecting Rust's veracity, as the knowledge which you already had of his character should have induced you to do, rashly forbade his rival the house; and,

I am sorry to say, added harsh words to the wrong which you were already committing. I need not tell you who that young man was. He came to me shortly afterward, and told me what had occurred. He's a noble fellow, for not one hard word or epithet did he breathe against you. He said he was aware that for a long time back some person had been endeavoring to poison your mind against him. He had observed it in the gradual change of your manner, and in your avoiding his society. He had hoped, he said, that in time, when you found out that his character was fair and irreproachable, these hard feelings would wear off, and you could again meet as heretofore. But this was not to be. Instead of diminishing, your hostility to him increased, until one day when he was in your own house, you used language to him which left him no alternative but to quit it for ever. The charges which you made against him were very grave, Jacob, and very vile; and when you made them, you had no right to withhold the name of the person on whose authority you accused him; but you did; and although Ned might and did suspect Michael Rust to be the kind friend to whom he owed your ill-will, yet he had no proof of it that would justify him in calling him to account. Ned had a hard task before him; for the charge you made against him was that of harboring evil thoughts and of cherishing unfair designs against your child. It was a serious charge, and one that he could not refute; for a man's thoughts are not susceptible of proof; all that he can do in justification, is to point to his past life and say: 'Judge by that;' and unless Ned could impeach the character of his traducer, of whom he was then ignorant, he had no alternative but to submit, and to hope that time would exculpate him. Now, Jacob, even supposing Rust had not confessed that the tales which he had told you

respecting Ned were calumnies, is there any thing in Ned's past life to justify the suspicion you have cherished against him? Answer candidly, and you will answer 'No.' Rust's motive was clear enough; he feared Somers, and wished to drive from you one who might be a friend in time of need, and who might one day stand as a shield between you and his dark purposes. Come, Jacob, Rust has confessed all; what he did, what his motives were; and now tell me whether you cannot say, from the bottom of your heart, 'Ned Somers, I have wronged you?'

He paused, and looked earnestly at Rhoneland, while every feature glowed with the fervor of his feelings. 'Come, Jacob, what do you say?'

There was one other person, too, who leaned forward to catch the reply; but Rhoneland answered:

'She's my only child, and she's very dear to me. It was a cruel suspicion, and perhaps I *did* act hastily. I will not say that I *did not*, for I was greatly excited, and said many things that I have since forgotten. But it was better that he should go. Was n't it, Kate?'

He turned to his daughter, took her hand, and repeated his question: 'Was n't it better that he should keep away, Kate?'

Kate's voice trembled as she asked: 'What harm did he do, father, in coming here? If his character is fair, why should he not come?'

Her father eyed her with an uneasy look. In truth, he feared Ned's presence; for he knew that he loved Kate, and that she reciprocated the feeling; and with the selfishness which old age sometimes brings with it, he was unwilling that she should care for another than himself, or that another should have a claim upon her. At last he replied, rather

sharply: 'The reason why he should not come is, because I do n't want him.'

Kate drew back, and said not another word; but Harson saw from her compressed lip that the reply had cut deeply; and catching her eye, he made a sign to her to leave them. Kate took the hint, and went out; and Harson, after looking Rhoneland steadily in the face for some time, said: 'Jacob, you have given *your* reason why Ned Somers should not come here. It's a very poor one, and not such as I expected. Now, I'll give you *mine* why he *should*: Kate loves him, and he loves her.'

Jacob knit his brows, but made no reply.

'And let me tell you, too, that unless you *do* consent, your child will die. I'm in earnest. There are some who fall in love, as they call it, a hundred times; bestowing their affections, such as they are, sometimes on one, sometimes on another; until at last perhaps the owner of a handsome face offers his hand, and gets in return the tattered thing they call their heart. God help me! this is called *love*. But thank God, for the credit of human nature, there are others who love as they should — purely, nobly, with their whole soul. These love once, and only once; and woe to the man who unwisely, or for his own selfish ends, crosses them! The sin of a broken heart too often lies at his door. Jacob, you're an old man; but you are not too old to have forgotten the wife who once was yours. You loved her well, my dear old fellow, I know it,' said he, taking his hand. 'She deserved it too. Kate is very like her. What would have been your feelings, had any one stepped in between you and her?'

Rhoneland grew pale, and the tears came in his eyes.

'Come, come, Jacob, I'll not press the matter now; but you must reflect on what I've said; and you must not forget

how much Kate has at stake. Ned's a glorious fellow, and will make your house very cheery.'

'Well, I'll think of it,' replied Rhoneland, after a short pause.

'*Do*; that's a good fellow. I'll consider it a personal favor; and I *do* think you owe me something for the pains I've taken in aiding to get you rid of that rascal Rust.'

'I do indeed owe you much,' replied Rhoneland, earnestly, 'and I am sincerely grateful.'

'Well, well, we won't speak of that; only reflect on what I have just said; and by the way, added he, rising to go, 'you must oblige me in another matter. Two or three friends are to dine with me to-morrow; you and Kate must be of the party.'

'We will,' was the reply.

'Good! Now go up stairs and comfort Kate.'

CHAPTER XXV.

A BRIGHT glowing day was the following one, the day of the dinner-party ; and right gladly did the golden sun beam out from the deep fathomless sky, as if from his lofty lookout he were aware of what was going on in this world below, and rejoiced in the failure of the evil machinations which had been so long disturbing the tranquillity of the worthy individuals who have figured in this history. And fortunate it was that neither clouds nor rain obscured his face ; for had the latter been added to the cares which the approaching dinner-party had already accumulated upon the culinary department of Harson's household, the housekeeper in the tall cap with stiff ribbons would have gone stark-mad. Miserable woman ! how she worked and fumed, and panted and tugged, and kneaded and rolled, and stuffed and seasoned, and skewered and basted and beat, during that day ! From soup to dessert, and from dessert to soup, over and over again, she toiled ; fish, flesh, fowl, vegetables, gravies, were all mingled in her head helter-skelter. She had dreamed of nothing else during the whole of the previous night, excepting a short interlude in the aforesaid dream, when she was night-mared by a fat pig, bestrode by a half-starved boy, who was all eyes. And now, as the day waned and the hour of the dinner approached, her ferment increased, until, to use a metaphor, she had worked herself up into a mental lather. Her voice was in every quarter, and so was her quick, hurried step. She was in the entry, up stairs, in the pantry, in the kitchen, and in the cellar ; at the street-door, giving orders to

the grocer's dirty boy to bring the cinnamon and alspice, and not to forget the sugar and butter, and to be sure to recollect the anchovies and pickles. The next moment she was scolding the butcher, because he had come late with the chops and cutlets; and every five minutes she thrust her head into the room to look at the clock, lest Time should steal a march upon her. Eleven, twelve, one, two o'clock. The tumult increased. Mrs. Chowles, punctual to her promise, made her appearance; forthwith dived into the kitchen, and did not emerge until dinner-time. The only person utterly unmoved was Harson, who had attended to his part of the business by looking after the wine, and who now sat with his feet to the fire, resolved to trouble his head about nothing, and apparently more asleep than awake. At times, however, he rose and went to one corner of the room, where a small boy, who seemed to be worn down by suffering, lay coiled up and sound asleep on a chair-cushion. The old man bent over him, gently parted the hair from his forehead, and then rising up, somewhat red in the face from the exertion, rubbed his hands one over the other by way of indicating that all was as it should be; stole back to his seat on tiptoe, lest he should awaken him, and forthwith relapsed into his former state of dreamy abstraction. Nothing could arouse him; not even the housekeeper when she dashed into the room with a face at roasting-heat, and demanded the key of the wine-cellar. It was handed to her mechanically, and mechanically pocketed when she brought it back.

But the hour of dinner drew near; and a smell began to pervade the house which aroused Harson at last. He sat up in his chair and smacked his lips; and Spite, who for an undue curiosity as to the contents of a small pasty, exhibited early in the day, had been escorted into the room by the house-

keeper, with a broomstick in his suite, sat under the same chair, licking his lips and slavering profusely.

Again the red face of the housekeeper was projected into the room, and as instantly withdrawn. It wanted half an hour to the time. In and out again; it wanted twenty-five minutes. In and out again; twenty minutes. The matter was growing serious, and there was something frantic in her looks. But this time Harson caught her, and told her that it was time to put an end to that performance, as he expected his friends every minute; that she must guess as to the time; and that he would ring when she was to serve the dinner.

A rap at the door! and before it could be answered, a heavy step crossed the ante-chamber.

'There 's Frank,' said Harson, rising and facing the door; and in came the Doctor. But he was not alone; for close behind him followed Ned Somers, dressed in his best. Harry shook hands with them; but before he had time to do more than that, Jacob Rhoneland entered with Kate on his arm, looking very rosy from her walk.

What could it be that caused Ned's heart to flounce and dance about as wildly as a caged bird; and his cheek to grow at first pale, and then burning hot; and his lips to quiver, and his voice to tremble so that he could scarcely speak, and for a moment was unable even to tell Kate that he was glad to see her? Whatever the complaint was, it was infectious; for Kate's heart certainly did beat very rapidly; and her color went and came, until it settled into a deep burning blush, as she turned and saw Ned there, looking at her as if he had eyes for nothing else.

'Good-morning, Mr. Somers,' said she at last, in a tone that was neither firm nor clear.

'Call me Ned, Kate,' said he in a low voice; 'don't say

Mr. Somers. Won't you shake hands with me? There can be no harm in that.' He extended his hand; she placed hers in it, and at the same time whispered in his ear, (for Harry, seeing that there was some by-play going on, kept Jacob busy,) 'Speak to father as if nothing had happened. I think he's inclined to make up. *Do, Ned.'*

Turning from him, she commenced talking to the Doctor, while Somers, after a moment's hesitation, went up to the old man and offered his hand.

Rhoneland hesitated, for he experienced the reluctance which old age always evinces to succumb to those younger in years; and it was not very pleasant to admit that his conduct toward Ned had been wrong. But there was something in the expression of Ned's face, and even in the way in which he offered his hand, which showed that the past was forgiven; and besides that, what had already happened could not be mended by holding out; so Jacob grasped his hand, and said frankly:

'Ned, my young friend, I wronged thee sadly. I hope you will pardon it.'

'That's right, Jacob! Spoken like a whole-hearted old fellow, as you are!' exclaimed Harson, patting him on the shoulder. 'To be sure he will forgive you, and thank you for the chance. If he does n't, he's not what I take him to be. Do n't you pardon him?' demanded he, turning to Somers, and at the same time casting a quizzical look in the direction of Kate.

Ned laughed; said something about pardon being unnecessary, where no offence had been taken; and then commenced talking about indifferent matters.

Presently Holmes came in; and after him, Grosket, and one or two cronies of Harson's; and then the little girl; so that the room became quite full. The boy too, aroused by

the noise of talking, awoke ; stared wildly around him, and, though a boy of genteel lineage, evinced a great distaste to mingling in society, and fought manfully to retain his position in the corner, when Harson attempted to lead him out. His sister endeavored, in an undertone, to impress upon him the propriety of adapting his manners to the change in his situation ; but it must be confessed that her success was but indifferent ; and it is a matter of some doubt whether he would ever have emerged, had not a tall, awkward boy, (a second cousin of the housekeeper, and apprenticed to a tailor,) who had been borrowed to officiate as waiter on this eventful occasion, thrust his head in the door and remarked, ‘Cousin Martha says you may come to dinner just as quick as you like,’ and forthwith disappeared, slamming the door after him, and clattering across the entry as if shod with paving-stones.

This aroused the company ; and this too emboldened the small boy, who, being restrained by his sister from rushing into the room before any one else, nevertheless crowded in, and secured a seat at the table, opposite the best dish.

What a sight ! A table loaded with fish and flesh and fowl ; glittering and glowing with cleanliness ; linen as white as snow, and plates and dishes that glistened and shone until you could see your face in them, while the steam alone which rose from each of them might have made a lean man fat ; and then, there were the decanters too, in which the ruby wine sparkled, until it made even Dick Holmes smack his lips.

‘Aha !’ ejaculated one of the neighbors, a thin, hungry fellow, with large eyes ; ‘aha !’ And he snuffed up the dinner as if he intended to appropriate it all, and as if he intended his nose to be the only member destined to play a part there.

Harry paused at the head of his table, and said a short grace; and then seizing a carving-knife, he plunged it forthwith into the fat saddle; and as he drew the knife along the bone, and cut out the long strips, the steam and savor filling the room, it was to be feared that the thin neighbor would have gone beside himself, lest his favorite piece should be given to some one else before his turn came. But such a dinner as graced that table is a thing to be eaten, not spoken of; and so thought the small boy, who, notwithstanding his genteel extraction, brought with him the appetite which he had acquired by education. A dreadful havoc he made in that fat saddle! It was labor lost for his sister to kick and pinch him under the table, in hopes of checking his course. He returned the kicks, but his onward course was unaltered. What eyes he had for the meats and gravies! what a deaf ear he turned to all invitations to waste his energies on bread and vegetables, or trifles of that sort! His appetite, though belonging to a child, was full-grown, and needed no assistance. All that he required was quantity — and he got it.

‘Help yourself, my son,’ said Harson, actually growing hungry by seeing the child eat. ‘Do n’t spare any thing.’

The boy looked up at him, over a bone which he was picking, and said nothing.

The first course went off, and so did a second and third. Martha had excelled herself. Every thing was praised; and at every fresh eulogy, the tall boy darted to the kitchen to communicate the intelligence to his aunt. How *he* enjoyed that party! how he skimmed his fingers round the plates, as he took them through the entry; sucking the ends of them so loudly, that his aunt thought that the corks were flying out of the porter-bottles! He was perfectly happy.

It was remarked that, when the dinner was over, some of

the guests were uncommonly mellow; and it is credibly asserted that Dick Holmes, who had spent his life among parchment and cobwebs, had during the meal buried his mouth in the bosom of his waistcoat, and had there been heard confidentially singing to himself a short song of an Anacreontic character. But be that as it may, when he rose from the table, his eye certainly was not a little lively, and his spirits were high. Nor was there any flagging among the rest; for whether the jests were good or bad, or the songs poor, or the conversation common-place, certain it is, that a more jovial set had never met. Every one seemed to have been placed beside the person who suited him; Harry sat with Jacob on one side of him, and the widow at the head of the table, with the Doctor at her right hand; and Dick Holmes and Grosket together; and Ned and Kate, so close that their elbows touched; and Annie beside her brother; and her brother, although somewhat incommoded by his sister, directly opposite the best dish on the table. And then the one or two neighbors, who knew no one except each other, seated in a knot, contrived to grow moist and merry because the others did, and laughed because Harry did. Choice spirits! who could split their very sides, without a joke to abet them in it; just the fellows to help out a dinner-party.

When they separated, it was late at night. The Doctor gallantly volunteered to escort the widow to her abode, which offer was accepted without hesitation. Harry remarked that, as it was a fine night, he thought he would walk too.

‘Come, Jacob, you and I will go together,’ said he, taking the old man by the arm; ‘and Ned, you look after Kate. No grumbling, but make yourself useful.’ Saying this, he trudged rapidly on, dragging the old man with him.

What passed between him and Jacob, or what took place between Ned and Kate, I cannot say; but they certainly were the two tardiest people that ever walked; for long after Harrison and Rhoneland had reached the end of their journey, and stood waiting in front of Rhoneland's door, they were not in sight; and when they did at last appear, it seemed a perfect eternity before they were within calling distance; and then even longer before they reached the door. And although, from the pace at which they had come, it might have been argued that one or the other of them was laboring under extreme debility or fatigue, yet it was a remarkable fact, that the looks of neither justified such a conclusion.

'What idlers you are!' exclaimed Harry, as they came up. 'As for you,' said he, turning to Ned, 'such a loiterer should be trusted to escort no one unless it were his grandmother, or a rheumatic old lady of seventy.'

Ned Somers laughed, as he answered: 'We don't all walk as rapidly as you do.'

'The more shame for you,' exclaimed Harrison. 'Upon my life! I believe I'm younger than any of you. Look to yourself, my lad, or I may take it into my head to cut you out of a wife; and if you lose her, you won't require the snug little legacy which I intend to leave you when I'm underground. Come; shake hands with the girl, and bid her good-night: you've kept her in the street long enough. Good-night, Jacob — good-night, Kate.'

He took her hand, and whispered, 'Be of good heart; your father is coming round.'

His mouth was very near her ear; and as he whispered, Ned happened to be looking at them, and thought that the communication did not stop with the whisper; and Harrison himself looked very wickedly up at him, as much as to say

‘Do you see that?—you had better have a sharp eye to your interests!’

Long and earnest was the conversation which ensued between Harson and Somers on their way home; and nobly did the character of that old man shine out, as he detailed his future views for his young friend’s welfare.

‘You need not thank me,’ said he, in reply to Ned’s warm acknowledgments. ‘The best return that I can have will be, to find you always in word and deed such that I may be proud of you; and hereafter, when I see others looking up to you, and hear you spoken of as one whose character is above all reproach, that I may say to myself: ‘Thank God, I helped to make him what he is.’ This is all that I want, Ned; and your future life will be your best acknowledgment, or will prove your heartless ingratitude. Let neither success nor failure tempt you to swerve from what your own heart tells you to be right and fair. Turn out as your schemes may, never forget to keep your motives pure; and believe me that, come what will, you’ll find an easy conscience a great comforter in the hour of trial. Your father was one of my oldest friends; a noble, upright man he was; and it would have wounded him deeply that any one belonging to him should have been otherwise; and it would give me many a heavy hour if his only child did not turn out all that I expected him to be. I am right glad to learn that you are getting bravely on in your business; and as for this matter with Kate,’ said he, pausing, for they had come to where their routes separated, ‘it can easily be made right. I love her as my own child; and I would not have her thwarted for the world. I’ll see Jacob again to-morrow; and have no doubt that he will give his consent at last. Perhaps it would be better for you not to present yourself at his house too soon. Work your way back to where you

were, cautiously, and say nothing to him about marrying Kate, until you and he are on your old terms of good-fellowship. It won't be long, depend on it. And now, recollect what I told you a few moments ago. If you want any assistance in your business, or if a loan of a thousand or two dollars, or a good word from me, will push you on, you shall have it. Good-night!' And Harson had not gone a hundred yards, before he was whistling so loud that he might have been heard half a mile.

'God help you, Harry!' muttered Somers, looking after the stout, burly figure of his friend; 'God bless your warm old heart! What a glorious world this would be, if there were more in it like you!'

CHAPTER XXVI.

AT the dead of the night, when all others were at rest, Michael Rust glided out of his office. It was a strange hour, but he had become a strange man. Through the silent streets he stole, with a step so noiseless that it awoke no echo. Along Broadway, passing where the city ended and the fields began, mile after mile he went. He met no one. Every house that he passed was as silent as the grave; except a solitary one, standing by itself, with a light shining through an upper window, as if some one kept watch at a sick-bed. Sometimes the road ran between high trees, whose skeleton outlines stood grimly up between him and the stars, stiff and motionless. At other times, it coursed along dreary wastes; then again, it was buried in dense shadow; now ascending, now descending. At times he caught a glimpse of the distant gray river, gleaming in the darkness, with here and there the light on board some vessel at anchor, glittering like a star. In some places, where it was shut in by high banks, the road seemed inky black; and parts of it were so solitary, that even a stout heart might have shrunk from traversing it at that dreary hour. But Rust thought not of fear. What had *he* to do with that feeling, who sought only revenge and a grave?

It was yet night when he reached a house in the upper part of the island, and near the river. Little except its dim outline was visible in the obscurity; and as he opened the gate, and passed beneath an avenue of tall trees which led to it, the darkness was such that he could scarcely see. But he was familiar with the ground, and without hesitation

went directly to the door of the house. It was locked. He drew a key from his pocket, unlocked it, went in, and closed it after him. He groped his way along the hall until he came to the door of a room, which he opened. A few embers were smouldering on the hearth, sufficient to throw out a dim light. Lighting a candle which stood on a table, he drew a chair to the fire and sat down. The chamber was large, fitted up as a library, and filled with massive book-cases of dark wood, elaborately carved, which gave a sombre appearance to the room. Nothing that money could buy had been spared; for this was the home of Rust's daughter, and that hard, reckless, griping man had been alive but to one feeling—love to his child. In *her* were garnered up all his affections, and upon her he had lavished all that his means could obtain.

For a long time he sat without changing his position, his eye fixed, his mouth compressed, his brow knit, not a sound escaping him. At last he started from his fit of abstraction, with a slight shiver; passed his hand once or twice before his eyes, as if to dispel something that clouded his sight; and said, in a whisper, 'Can all this be real?' The clock struck three. He rose, cast a stealthy glance over his shoulder, and taking the candle in his hand, held it up over his head, examining the room with a suspicious look, as if he momentarily expected some form to start from behind the heavy furniture. As his eye was wandering round the room, it rested upon a picture in a carved frame, which hung against the wall. He went to it, and held the light so that its rays fell full upon it. It was the portrait of a girl of about seventeen. Could the child-like, innocent face which gazed out from the canvas upon that fierce, passion-worn man, be that of *his* child? Could aught so pure and beautiful have sprung from such as him? And worse than

all, could she have lost that purity which was stamped on every line of her face?

With fixed and rigid features, with a hand that did not tremble, with a heart that scarcely beat, he contemplated the picture; and then slowly, as if in a dream, replaced the candle, and took his seat. There was that at work within him, however, which banished bodily repose; for in one minute afterward, he was up and pacing the room, muttering and gesticulating to himself; the *next*, he went to a mirror, and looked at his own face. He started as he did so; for he had not seen it in a week; and in that time so altered and wasted had it become, with its long unshorn beard, and ghastly white complexion, that he could scarcely recognize it.

‘What a bird of prey the mind is!’ muttered he; ‘how it devours the body!’ He turned away, and once more his eye rested on the picture which hung against the wall. Some strange feeling seemed to spring into existence as he did so; for his breath came thick and hard; his heart beat, until its pulsations could be heard, loud and strong like the blows of a hammer; his hand shook; but at the same time, his brow darkened, and its look of anxious and half-wandering thought gave place to an expression that was perfectly fiendish. He muttered a few words; then, taking the light, cautiously opened the door, and stole up the broad flight of stairs which led to the upper story. At the head of it was a door; he tried it; it was not locked, but yielded to his push. It opened into a bed-room, luxuriously furnished with mirrors, and various nick-nacks and articles of taste, such as a young and wealthy female gathers about her; and in the bed lay a beautiful girl, the original of the picture below, sound asleep, her long hair, which had become unbound as she slept, lying in loose tresses upon the pillow. How bright and beautiful she was! How gentle and calm

her breathing was! And well might the stern old man, as he looked at her angel face, have misgivings as to the truth of Grosket's tale. Rust's hard features worked convulsively as he stood over his child, as if powerful feelings were tugging at his heart-strings; but it was only for a moment, for he choked them down; and going out, in the cautious manner in which he had entered, he closed the door and descended to the room below.

He resumed his seat; and although hour after hour elapsed before daylight stole into the room, his attitude remained the same, until a servant came in to light the fire and uttered an exclamation of surprise at seeing him. This aroused him; and rising hastily, he said, 'I'm going out. Tell your mistress that I'll be here at ten o'clock.' He left the house; and after wandering up and down the road, he crossed the fields until he came to the edge of the river, and when he had sauntered along it for some time, he sat down upon a rock, and commenced casting pebbles in the water.

How long a time he passed in this way, he could not tell, but it must have been several hours; for on looking at his watch, he found that it was late in the day. Suddenly, recollecting his message to his daughter, he rose and went directly to the house. He crossed the lawn in front of it; but before he had time to reach the door, a light figure sprang out, and his child's arms were about his neck.

'Dear father! it's a very long time since I saw you!' said she, putting back the hair which hung over his face, and pressing her lips to his cheek. 'I'm very happy at having you here once more. But you are ill—very ill! What ails you?' said she suddenly, as she observed the inroads which the last few days had made in his whole form. Rust

withdrew from her embrace, and without answering her question, said in a cold tone: 'Come in the house.'

Though his words were simple, there was that in his manner (or it might have been the consciousness of guilt on the part of the girl) which caused her cheek to grow pale, and her step to falter; and she accompanied him to the library, with the silent and downcast look of a criminal. He took a chair, drew it to the fire, and pointing to another, said in the same cold tone: 'Be seated.'

The girl obeyed without a word. At that moment a servant opened the door, and told Rust that a man was inquiring for him.

Rust got up and went out. In the entry were two men. One of them, a powerfully-built fellow, of about five-and-thirty, with light hair and a prominent eye, asked, 'Are you Michael Rust?'

Rust scanned him from head to foot. He suspected his errand, for he had seen him before; and he replied simply: 'I am.'

'Then, Sir, we've come for you.' At the same time, the man produced a slip of paper, and tapped Rust on the shoulder. 'Here's the warrant, if you'd like to look at it, and the vehicle's in the road there.' He gave a nod in the direction.

Rust evinced neither surprise nor trepidation. He merely said, in a musing tone, 'I should have stipulated for a longer time, for the lawyer has lost none.' Then addressing the officer, he added: 'My daughter is in the room. Before going with you, I should like to speak with her in private. You may examine the room, to see that there are no means of escaping from it.'

The man took him at his word; went in the room; glanced round without noticing the girl, who regarded him

with some surprise; then went to an inner door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

‘Are you satisfied?’ asked Rust.

The other again stared round the room: went to the window; looked out to see how high it was from the ground; said that he was, and then inquired: ‘How long?’

‘Ten minutes,’ was the reply.

‘Good!’ said the man; and with a knowing look at Rust, and a shambling bow to the girl, he went out, and seated himself on a chair in the hall, having taken the precaution to send his companion to keep an eye on the windows, which were within leap of the ground.

Rust returned to his seat. ‘Come hither, Ellen,’ said he.

His daughter rose, and came to him; but in dead silence.

‘Look at me. Am I much altered?’ inquired Rust.

The girl raised her eyes to his. They quailed before his stern, searching glance; but she replied in a low voice: ‘You’re very much altered.’

A smile of strange meaning crossed Rust’s face. He turned, and pointed to the picture which hung against the wall.

‘Was that ever a good likeness of you?’ asked he.

His daughter glanced at it, with some surprise at the sudden question, and then replied: ‘I’ve often been told so, father — a very good one.’

‘They told you the truth. It *was* a good one; and now,’ said he, turning to her, and fixing his eyes on her face, ‘do you think I am as much changed from what *I* was, as you are from what *you* were, when that picture was painted? Mark it well!’ said he, speaking quickly and earnestly, and leaning forward until his face almost touched hers. ‘Look at every feature. See what innocence, what purity of soul and thought is in every line of that face. An angel might

have envied its innocence. There is a mirror,' said he, pointing to the looking-glass; 'Now look at yourself.' He half rose, and his voice was cold and cutting as he concluded.

The girl grew red; then deeper and deeper crimson; then deadly, ghastly pale; the perspiration stood upon her forehead, and her eyes were blinded with tears: but she could not meet his glance.

His voice sank almost to a whisper, as he asked: 'Then what I have heard is true?'

The girl seemed absolutely stunned.

'Be it so. Now you know the cause of my illness. Look at me. Look at this face, scored with wrinkles; these hollow cheeks, and this frame, broken down by premature old age. Look at them, I say, and you will see but a faint image of the utter, hopeless waste that has been going on in my heart.'

The girl made an attempt to speak; sank on the floor; and clasping his knees, pressed her head against them, and sobbed aloud. But Rust moved not. There was no trace of compassion in either tone or manner, as he continued: 'From your childhood until now, you were the person for whose welfare I toiled. I labored and strove for you; there was not a thing that I did, not a thought that I ever harbored, which had not your happiness for its aim; and to your love and devotion I looked for my reward; and as I brooded over my own guilty life, blackened as it was with the worst of crimes, I thought that it was some palliation to be the parent of one pure and spotless as you were. Well, you turned out as hundreds of others have done, and my labor was lost. I loved you as never child was loved; and in proportion as my love once was great, so now is my hate and scorn!'

'Oh! my God!' gasped the girl. She sank down as if

crushed. Rust looked at her unmoved, and did not stir to assist her. She raised her hands to him, and said in a supplicating tone: 'Father! as you hope for mercy, hear me!'

'If I received not mercy from my own child,' said Rust, sternly, 'to whom can I look for it? I hope for it no where; I ask for it no where; I am at bay to the whole world.'

One of those dark, withering expressions which had once been so common to his features, but which his anguish had for the last few days in a great measure banished from them, swept across his face.

The girl wrung her hands, as she received his harsh answer. At last she said, in a broken voice: 'Father, I am sadly guilty; but hear me, for God's sake; *do* hear me!'

At that moment the door was opened, and the officer's head was thrust in.

'Time's up.'

'I must have ten minutes more,' said Rust.

'You can't.'

'I must, I *will*,' exclaimed Rust, sternly.

He tossed him a dollar, which the man caught in his hand with professional dexterity; and then, with a grin, said: 'Well, if you're so very anxious, of course you must be accommodated;' and disappearing, he shut the door.

'You said that you were guilty,' resumed Rust, turning to his daughter. 'I know it. There's but one more so. You know to whom I allude. What is his name?'

The girl grew very pale, and hung down her head in silence.

'Who is he?' again demanded her father, seizing her arm with a strong grasp.

Still she made no reply.

'Be it so,' said Rust, flinging her hand from him. 'Perhaps silence is best. Now, one other question. *Where* is he?'

She shook her head, and replied in a scarcely audible tone that she did not know.

‘When was he last here?’

‘About a week since.’

‘And when did he promise to return?’

‘On the same day,’ answered the girl, in a low tone.

‘And he has not kept that promise. The first of a series of black-hearted lies!’ exclaimed Rust, bitterly, speaking more to himself than to her. ‘In these cases, lies come first, and the truth last.’ He again addressed her: ‘Does he speak of marriage? and do *you* urge it upon him?’

‘I *do*, indeed I *do*!’ replied the girl, apparently anxious to hit upon something to conciliate the stern mood of her parent. ‘Often and often I remind him of his promise.’

‘And what is his answer?’ demanded Rust, with a half-mocking smile.

‘He says that he cannot marry me just now, but that he will soon. He wishes to obtain the consent of his father, who is very ill, and cannot be spoken to about it; but that he will soon be better, and that then it will all be settled.’

‘How long has he been making these excuses?’

‘A very long time — a very long time,’ said the girl, sadly: ‘A month and more.’

‘How often did he come here at first?’

‘Every day,’ said the girl.

‘And now?’

His daughter was silent; for she began to see the drift of this cold examination, and it sent a chill to her heart.

Rust was satisfied; and he said in a half-musing tone: ‘The same stale, hackneyed story. She is on her way to where the first misstep always leads. Already he is wearied, and wants but an excuse to fling her off; and I — I — I —

her avenger,' exclaimed he with a burst of fierce impatience, 'I am shackled; a prisoner, and can do nothing!'

He made a hasty step to the door, opened it, and beckoned to the officer to come in. As he did so, he shut it after him, took the man by the arm, and drew him to one end of the room:

'I want a week,' said he in a quick tone. 'I'll give a thousand dollars to gain one week; and at the end of that time will surrender myself a prisoner.'

The man shook his head: 'It can't be done, Sir,' said he.

'What's the reward offered for my apprehension?'

'A cool five hundred,' replied the officer.

'I'll double it to escape,' said Rust, 'or to gain a week, but a single week.'

The man shook his head. 'Too many knows that we're arter you. It would n't do.'

'But at the expiration of that time I would surrender myself, and you could secure the reward too.'

The man gave vent to a low chuckle, and placed his finger on the side of his nose, accompanying the motion with a sly expression, signifying an utter disbelief in Rust's promises.

Rust gnawed his lip with fierce impatience; then taking the man by the arm, he led him into the hall, and shut the door.

'I must speak out,' said he, 'and trust to your honor not to betray me. A villain has seduced my child. I want to find him, and to compel him to make her his wife. Now you know why I ask a week.'

The officer at first whistled, then muttered something about its being a hard case; but concluded by saying, in a positive tone: 'It can't be did, Sir: I'm sorry for it; upon my word I am; but I must keep you now that I've got

you. I wish you'd given me the slip at first; but I can't let you go now. It's impossible — quite.'

Rust eyed the man, as if endeavoring to find in his hard features some loop-hole to his more kindly feelings; but apparently he met with no success.

'Well, if it can't be done, there's an end of it,' said he, abruptly terminating his scrutiny. 'I've some other matters to speak of, and want a few moments more. 'I'll not detain you long, and will call you when I'm ready.'

'I'll give you all the time I can,' said the man, civilly.

Rust turned to enter the room, but as he did so he heard a quick step behind him; and looking round, found himself face to face with a young man of two or three and twenty, elegantly dressed, who eyed him carelessly, and then passing him, entered the room with the air of one perfectly at home. A suspicion of who he was flashed across Rust's mind. That he himself was unknown to the other was not strange, for he had been so much absent, and when he visited his child it was at such irregular intervals, and for such short periods, that a person might have been even a frequent visitor at his house, without encountering him. Nor was there any thing in the outward appearance of the slovenly, haggard old man to attract attention. But the indifference of the other was not reciprocated; for Rust followed him, and closed the door after him, with feverish haste, as if he feared his prey might escape. He observed the deep blush that sprang to the cheek of his daughter at the entrance of the stranger; her guilty, yet joyous look as he addressed her; and above all, he perceived *his* careless, cold, indifferent reply to her warm salutation; and a feeling of revenge, the deadliest that he had ever felt, sprang up in his heart against that man; not so much because he had blasted

the happiness of his child, as because he had torn from *him* all that he had clung to in life.

Rust walked to the fire-place, turned his back to it, and without uttering a word, faced the stranger, who eyed him from head to foot with a cool, supercilious stare; then looked at the girl, as if seeking an explanation.

The pause, however, was broken by Rust himself, as he pointed with his thin finger to their visitor, and inquired of his daughter: 'Is *that* the man?'

The girl's face became ghastly pale; her lips moved, but she dared not raise her eyes; for she could not encounter the keen, inquiring look which she knew was fixed upon her.

'Answer my question,' said he, sternly. 'This is no time for tampering with my patience.'

His daughter attempted to speak. She trembled from head to foot; but not a word escaped her. So intense was her anguish, that it awoke a spark of better feeling in the young man; for, confronting Rust, he said in a bold voice: 'If you have any questions to ask respecting me, address them to *me*, not to *her*.'

'I will,' replied Rust, fixing upon him an eye that fairly glowed; 'for you should best know your own character. Are you the cold-blooded scoundrel who, taking advantage of that girl's confiding disposition, of the absence of her father, stole like a thief into his house; by lies, by false oaths, and damning, hypocritical professions of love, won her affection; blighted her, and then left her what I blush to name? You wish the question addressed to you; you have it. I'll have your reply.'

Withering like a parched leaf; shrinking as if a serpent were in his path; with a face which changed from white to red, from red to white, the stranger met these questions. But Rust's eye never left his face. There was no trace of

anger nor emotion in his marble features. He merely said: 'I want your answer.'

With a face heavy with guilt; with a voice that shook even while it assumed a tone of boldness; the stranger demanded: 'Who are you? and what right have you to question me thus?'

'Not *much* right,' replied Rust; 'I'm not even a rival suitor; I'm *only* this girl's father. Perhaps you will answer me now.'

The other was silent. Rust turned to his daughter, and said: 'This man has suddenly become dumb. Is this he of whom we spoke? An answer I must have, and a true one. Do not add a lie to the infamy which already covers you.'

The girl hesitated, and then uttered something in a voice so low as to be scarcely audible; but faint as it was, Rust caught the word, '*It is!*'

'It is well,' replied he, facing the stranger, and drawing his person up erect. 'I have no time to waste in words, and will state what I have to say as concisely as possible, and will act as promptly as I speak. This is my only child. She was once unsullied, and I was proud of her: that she is not so *now*, is your fault. There is but one mode of repairing what you've done. Will you marry her?'

'I certainly intend to do so,' said the young man, with a guilty look, which gave the lie to his words.

'I want *deeds*, not *intentions*,' replied Rust. 'What you do must be done *now* — before you leave this room. A clergyman resides within a mile. In half an hour he can be here.'

The girl clasped her hands joyfully, and looked eagerly at him; but there was nothing responsive in the expression of his face; and he answered:

‘I can’t see the necessity of this haste; beside, it would ruin all my prospects.’

‘*You* can’t see the necessity of this haste!’ exclaimed Rust, in a voice of thunder. ‘Ruin *your* prospects! What has become of *her* prospects? What — what —— But no matter,’ added he, choking down a fierce burst of passion, and suddenly assuming a tone so unnaturally calm that it might have been a warning to the other that it was but a lull in the storm. ‘Michael Rust presents his compliments to his unknown friend, and begs to know if he will do him the honor of marrying, on the spot, his daughter whom he has polluted?’

He paused for an answer; his lips were deadly white and quivering, and his eye glowed. The young man quailed before it; but apparently he was only waiting for an opportunity to throw off the mask; for he answered boldly: ‘No, I will not.’

‘You had better,’ said Rust, in a low, warning tone. ‘Think of it again.’

‘You have my answer,’ was the reply.

‘Then take Michael Rust’s thanks!’ A flash and report followed; and when the smoke cleared away, the seducer was lying on the floor, stone dead. A bullet had passed through his head. The policemen rushed in the room.

‘If I could have had a week, I might have avoided this,’ said Rust, coldly. ‘As it was, I had no alternative.’

He rang the bell, and a servant came in. He pointed to his daughter, who was lying senseless at his feet.

‘Look to your mistress!’

Turning to the policemen, who stood by with blanched faces, he said: ‘Now then, I am ready!’

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN a small room, containing a box-bedstead, a single chair, and a common wooden table, on which was a pitcher of water, sat Michael Rust. The heavy iron bars which grated the windows, and the doors of thick oaken plank, secured by strong bolts of iron, indicated beyond a doubt the nature of his abode — a prison. He was sitting on the edge of his bed, with his arms resting on the table, which was drawn close to it, and his head leaning upon them. At times he straightened himself up, looked listlessly about the room, and then resumed his old position.

A key turned in the door; the heavy bolt was drawn back, and a head was thrust in.

‘Some one wants to see you. Shall he come in?’

‘Yes.’

The head was withdrawn, and the door being opened, admitted no less a person than Mr. Kornicker, somewhat faded in appearance since we last saw him, but still wearing an air of dashing pretension. He stood at the door, shaking his head, winking to himself, and fumbling in his pocket, evidently in a state of great mental perplexity, probably from his entertaining doubts as to what would be the character of his reception; or from his being equally uncertain as to the best mode of opening the conversation. Nor was he at all relieved by Rust, who, without moving, fastened his eye upon him with a cold, steadfast stare.

Kornicker, however, seemed to have fixed upon his course

of action at last ; for he walked up to him, and stretching out his hand, said :

‘ Won’t you give us your fist, my old fellow ? You’re in trouble, but I’ll stand by you to the last. If I don’t, damme ! ’ He struck his other hand on the table, and nodded and winked with great vehemence.

‘ So there is yet one who has not turned his back on the felon,’ said Rust, partly addressing Kornicker and partly speaking to himself ; ‘ one true man ; a rare thing in this world ; a jewel — a jewel beyond all price ; and, like all costly stones, found only in the poorest soils ; but,’ added he, ‘ what have *I* done to gain friends, or to link one solitary heart to my fortunes ? — what ? ’

He shook his head ; and although his face was unmoved, and he spoke in the low, half-soliloquizing manner of one who rather brooded over the past than regretted it, yet there was something so sad in his tone, and in his melancholy gesture, that it did more to call forth the warm feelings of Kornicker than the most eloquent language.

‘ What have you done ? ’ demanded he, earnestly ; ‘ I’ll *tell* you what you did. When I was at low-water mark, with scarce a rag to my back or a crust to my stomach, and without a prospect of getting one, you took me by the hand, and in a d——d gentlemanly way gave me a hoist out of the gutter. *That’s* what you did ; and if you *did* flare up now and then, and haul me over the coals, it was soon over, and soon forgotten. I don’t bear malice, old fellow. Is is n’t my way ; and as you’re in trouble now, if I *can* help you, I *will*. Never desert any one : am, unfortunately, bloody short of cash ; but you can have what I’ve got, and when I get more, you shall have *that* too.’

As he spoke, he plunged his hand to the bottom of his

pocket, drew out a very shabby-looking pocket-book, and deposited it on the table.

‘It is n’t much ; but you ’ll find it useful here, and you ’re welcome to it. This is n’t the shop where nothing put out at interest produces a heavy income.’

This offer had a powerful effect upon Rust ; and it seemed as if some long-dormant feelings were working their way to the surface from the depths of his heart. He gazed earnestly at his clerk, and once or twice opened his mouth to speak ; but finally he got up, and taking the pocket-book from the table, handed it back to Kornicker, saying :

‘I’m not in want of money. Gold is but dross *now*. I’ve plenty of it ; but its value in my eyes is gone.’

‘But,’ remonstrated Kornicker, holding his hands behind him, and looking obstinately in another direction, partly to avoid taking the pocket-book and partly to resist the solicitations of his own necessities, which were strenuously urging him to do so, ‘but you may want a lawyer to fight for you at your trial.’

‘For that farce I am prepared. I *have* one. He’s paid for it, and he’ll fight,’ said Rust. ‘It will avail nothing, for I did slay the man. It was a cold-blooded, deliberate murder. I planned it ; I went up to that place with the stern determination to commit it ; and I *did* commit it. It was no hasty act, done in a moment of fierce and sudden passion ; but a deed duly and deliberately meditated, and one that I would repeat. What *he* had done, it’s useless to mention. I had no redress, except what my own hand could give me. He has paid his forfeit, and I’ll pay mine. I’ll fight to the last ; because,’ added he, with that expression of stern purpose which so often settled on his face, ‘Michael Rust never yields ; and then, let the law do its worst. Take your money ; I do n’t need it.’

Kornicker hesitated; and then thrusting it in his pocket, said: 'I suppose, if you should happen to be short, you'll let me know.'

'I will,' replied Rust; 'but I've enough to last until my sand is run out. They'll hang me.'

'Do n't talk so,' exclaimed Kornicker, with a feeling not a little akin to fear, at the cold, indifferent manner in which the other spoke. 'You *may* escape — who knows?'

Rust looked at him steadily, and then said, in a low, calm voice: 'If it were not that man and law were leagued against me to *force* me to my doom, not one dollar would Michael Rust give to add an hour to his life. He looks to the grave only as to that dark abyss which knows neither thought nor care; where the past is forgotten; where the future ends. Death is but a deep dreamless sleep, which has no waking. Yet even this boon he will not accept, if it's *forced* upon him.'

'But the disgrace, the disgrace of such an end,' exclaimed Mr. Kornicker, twisting his fingers together, and in his earnestness cracking the knuckles of all of them. 'Think of that, my old fellow. Think of the stain that will always rest upon your memory.'

A smile, without a trace of pleasure in it, but cold and icy, passed across Rust's face.

'What is my memory to me? What care I for the whispers and sneers and surmises of the reptiles who crowd this world, and who will soon be as *I* then shall be? What are these very men themselves? Shadows! — shadows! Go: my course is chosen. You can do nothing for me.'

Still Kornicker did not show any intention of quitting the room, but shifted from one leg to the other, in a fidgety manner, as if he had something farther to communicate, upon

which, however, he did not like to venture. At last he said: 'Your daughter?'

Rust turned a quick, keen eye on him, but farther than this, evinced no emotion.

'Perhaps she may need a friend, when — when ——'

'I'm dead,' said Rust, concluding what seemed to be rather an embarrassing sentence to Kornicker.

'I'm not exactly the fellow to make the offer,' said Kornicker, adopting the conclusion which Rust had given to the phrase; 'but — but I'll keep an eye on her, and will lend her a helping hand if she gets in trouble.'

Rust's countenance expressed neither pleasure nor anger, as he answered:

'Nothing can be done for her. Her fate is sealed; her path is marked out. There is neither turn nor winding in it, nor escape from the destiny to which it leads. She has taken the first step in it, and must follow it to the end. Look at the reckless and abandoned of her sex who crowd our thoroughfares at night. *Their* fate must be *her* fate; an outcast — then the tenant of a public prison, where her associates will be the thief and the felon. That's her second step. The third is — to her coffin: broken down, beggared, perhaps starving, she'll die surrounded by the offscouring of the earth — happy if she reaches her grave before she has run her full course.'

There was something in the apathetic manner in which the old man pointed out the future fate of his own child, that actually silenced Kornicker. He knew not what to say. There was no grief to console; no anger to deprecate; no wish to be fulfilled. He had, however, come to the prison with his mind made up to do something, and he did not like to be thwarted in his purpose. But before he had fairly determined what course was to be pursued next, Rust

interrupted the current of his ideas by saying, as he pressed his hand upon his heart :

‘You can do nothing for me. The disease is *here* ; and the only one who can heal it is the great Physician, Death. Could you blot the past from my memory and leave it one vast blank ; could you gild the future with hopes which this heart did not tell me were utterly hollow ; then perhaps Michael Rust might struggle on, like thousands of others, with some object in view, always to be striven for, but always receding as he advanced, or turning to ashes in his grasp. But it cannot be. I’ve played my part in the great drama of life, and the curtain will soon fall.’

A spirit of callous indifference pervaded all that he said and did ; and making a gesture to Kornicker, forbidding all farther remark, he threw himself on the bed, and drew the clothes about his head, as if determined to shut out all sound.

Kornicker made one or two efforts to draw him again into conversation, but the communicative mood was past ; and finding that nothing farther was to be done, he left him.

From that time Kornicker, true to his maxim of deserting no one, was constant in his visits and endeavors to comfort and assist him in preparing for his trial. But never had man a more arduous task than he found in this self-imposed duty ; for the hidden transactions of Rust’s past life had become public, and had turned the full tide of popular feeling against him ; and far and wide, through town and country, with all that could excite public animosity, rang that bloody tale, (for the dead man had powerful friends to battle for vengeance.) It was in every mouth, and whispered in every ear. In the broad glare of day, and before the eyes of the whole world, was paraded every secret of Rust’s life. Witnesses who had been forgotten and had sunk

from sight, and were supposed to be dead, sprang into life, all having some dark deed to record. Pamphlets, teeming with exaggerated details of the murder, were hawked through the streets; peddled at every corner; hung in every shop window. Rust's own black life had prejudged him, and had turned public opinion into public hate, until every voice called out for blood. It was under this feeling that his trial came on.

Early on that morning, long before the court was opened, a stream of people was thronging toward the City Hall by twenties and thirties and hundreds. The iron gates were barred to keep them out; still they contrived to get in, and swarmed through the halls. And when the court was opened, officers armed with staves were stationed on the stairs to fight them down, for there was no room for them. The court-room was crammed with men heaped upon men, climbing one on the other; heads upon heads, swarming like bees, and packed and wedged together, leaving not a foot to spare. And in the midst of all that living mass sat Rust, unmoved, unflinching; returning look for look, defiance for defiance; reckless as to his fate, but resolute not to yield.

There was one, however, at that trial, who was not so indifferent. He was a man of about fifty, tall and thin, with a grave, dignified face, which yet bore a strong resemblance to that of Rust. He was deadly pale, and sat next to Rust's lawyers, conversing with them in a low, earnest tone, and at times, as the trial went on, suggesting questions to them. This was Rust's brother; the father of the two children. Generous to the last, he had forgiven all, and was battling for the life of one who had done his utmost to blast his. If Rust's cold eye sank, or his spirit quailed, it was only when he encountered the mild, sad eye of that brother.

The jury was empanelled. The District Attorney opened the case for the prosecution; and then the examination of witnesses commenced. Foot by foot and inch by inch was the ground contested by Rust's counsel. Exceptions to testimony were taken, points of law raised, and every informality or technicality which afforded a loop-hole for objection was taken advantage of. The day dragged heavily on, and Rust grew weary. The constant stir about him; the hum of voices, occasionally hushed into silence at the cry of the officer, or the tap of the judge on his desk; the hot, stifling air of the room; the wranglings of the lawyers, all tended to bewilder him. All excitement had long since left him. A leaden heaviness had settled upon all his faculties, and, leaning his head upon the table, even while life and death were in the scale, he slept soundly.

He was aroused by his lawyer touching his arm. He sat up, and gazed vacantly about him.

'Who's that?' said he, pointing to the witness's stand.

Rust half started to his feet; then, clasping his hands hard together, sat down, and leaned his head on the table, but said not a word.

The clerk called out her name.

'Ellen Colton.'

'Who is she?' demanded the lawyer.

Rust drew himself up; and many who had been watching him, observed that his face had become perfectly corpse-like; his breathing oppressed; and that his eyes seemed starting from their sockets, as he fixed them on the witness.

'My own flesh and blood!' muttered he; 'my own child!'

The girl was sworn; but it was evident that a terrible struggle was going on, and she had to be supported to a chair. The lawyer for the prosecution took down her name,

and then asked her a question. He received no answer. He repeated it; but the girl was silent. She held down her head, and seemed half fainting.

‘You *must* reply,’ said the judge.

The girl raised her eyes, and said, in a low supplicating tone, ‘He’s my father.’

The judge shook his head. ‘It’s a very painful task,’ said he, ‘but there’s no alternative.’

The girl uttered not a word, and the court-room became so hushed that even the hard breathing of the witness was audible.

‘I must have an answer,’ said the judge, gravely, yet mildly, for he respected the feelings which dictated her course. ‘Will you answer the question put by the District Attorney?’

‘I will not,’ was the firm reply.

The face of the judge grew a little flushed, and he compressed his lips, as if the duty which now rested with him were an unpleasant one. But before he had time to speak, the District Attorney rose, and muttering in a tone loud enough to be heard, ‘I will not slay the parent through the child,’ said: ‘If the Court please, I withdraw the question. I’ll call another witness.’

The judge bowed, and the girl was led away.

Rust had risen to his feet as if to speak, but he sat down, and the trial proceeded. The whole of that day passed in the examination of witnesses; so did the day following. Then came the summing up of the lawyers, and the charge of the judge to the jury. During the whole time, the crowd came and went, but at all times the room was thronged. The jury went out; still the crowd hung about the Hall. It grew dark; but they could not go to their homes until they knew the result; but round and round the Hall, and through

the avenues of the Park, they wandered, watching the dim light in the jury-room, and wondering what the verdict would be. One of them stole up to the gray-headed officer who watched at the door, and inquired what the chance was; and as the old man shook his head, and muttered that they leaned toward a fatal verdict, he rubbed his hands with glee, and hastened to communicate the tidings to those below. Twelve — one — two — three o'clock at night came; still the twelve men held out, and still the judge, an upright, conscientious, patient man, maintained his post, waiting for the verdict, and ready to solve any doubts or points of law that might arise. The court-room grew cold; the fires went out, except one near the bench, and where the prisoner was. Sixty or seventy persons sat in the dim recesses of the room, looking like dark shadows, resolved to await the result. A few stretched themselves on the benches, and others gathered in knots near the fire, and whispered together; and now and then there was a loud laugh, suddenly hushed, as the person who uttered it remembered where he was. At last the judge went out, and left word with the officer to send for him if the jury agreed, or wanted his advice. The night waned; the sky grew gray in the east; and presently the day broke — but no verdict. At an early hour the judge returned, and the court-room filled again. Nine — ten — eleven. Suddenly there was a hum — a shuffling in the hall. The door was thrown open by the gray-headed constable, and the jury entered.

'The jury's agreed,' cried the officer. There was a dead silence among the crowd while the jury took their places, before the clerk called for their verdict. Then the foreman gave in the verdict:

'GUILTY OF MURDER IN THE FIRST DEGREE!'

Rust moved not; no change of color or feature was per-

ceptible, except a slight smile, and that too faded in a moment.

The trial was over; and the crowd poured out of the Hall and through the streets, yelling with delight, and stopping those whom they met, to tell them that Michael Rust was doomed to die.

Rust sat without stirring, until an officer touched him, and told him that he must go. He then rose, and followed him without a word. The crowd gathered around him, as he went out; but he did not notice them. His brother walked at his side, but he heeded him not; and when he reached his prison, without uttering a word, he flung himself wearily upon his bed, and was soon sound asleep.

He awoke, a different man; and when his lawyer called to see him on the following day, he found him as fierce as a caged beast. He endeavored to utter some remark of consolation; but Rust impatiently bade him to be silent. He spoke about a clergyman; but the reply was a laugh so mocking and scornful, that he was glad to drop the theme.

‘Is the game ended?’ at last inquired Rust. ‘Is there no farther cast of the die left?’

The lawyer looked at him, as if in doubt of his meaning.

Rust, in response to the look, repeated the question. ‘Is there nothing more to be done, in that farce called the law? Is there no farther blow to be struck for life?’

‘We can appeal,’ replied the lawyer; ‘but there is little chance of success.’ He took Rust by the hand, and said in a soothing tone: ‘My poor friend, you must be prepared for the worst; for I cannot promise to save your life.’

Rust rose and stood directly in front of him; and pointing to a small coin which lay on the table, said: ‘Not the tenth part of *that* would Michael Rust give to have one hour added to his life; but I *will not* be driven from it. I *will*

not be beaten down and crushed !' He stamped furiously on the floor.

'Fight !' said he, fixing his glaring eye on the lawyer ; 'fight to the last ; leave nothing untried ; spare not gold ; bribe — corrupt — suborn ; do any thing ; but do not leave the triumph to my enemies. It's that that is tearing away at my heart. It's *that* which is killing me,' exclaimed he, bitterly, shaking his hands over his head.

'We shall leave nothing untried,' said the lawyer. 'Perhaps too we may obtain a pardon ; for if ever a murder was justifiable, that was.'

'Pardon !' exclaimed Rust with a sneer ; '*pardon !* Because I defended my own flesh and blood ; because the laws had forced upon *me* the task which *they* should perform, I must die, or sue for pardon ! A noble thing is law !'

The lawyer was silent. He felt that Rust's own previous criminal life had been his worst enemy, and that it was the disclosure of his own evil plans, which had been in every mouth long before the trial, that had done much to harden the feelings of the jury, who in another case might have stretched a point to save him.

Merely repeating what he had already said, that every thing should be tried, he took his leave.

Some time had elapsed. The appeal was made, and was unsuccessful ; the decision of the court was affirmed ; and nothing was left but that the sentence of the law should be enforced. Rust still maintained his indifferent bearing. All attempts to move him to any thing like repentance were unavailing. Pious men had conversed with him, but he had turned a deaf ear to their words ; clergymen, anxious even at the last hour to turn his thoughts to holier things, had

called upon him, but were equally unsuccessful; and at last he forbade them admission.

It was just about dusk, on the day previous to that fixed for his execution, that he was sitting in his cell, when he was aroused by the opening of the door. He looked up, and observed a dim figure just inside the door, cowering as if with fear; but it was so dark that he could not distinguish more than its mere outline.

‘What do you want?’ demanded he, harshly. ‘Am I a wild beast, that you have come to stare at me?’

The only reply was a low, suppressed cry, as of one endeavoring to stifle down severe pain.

Rust rose up, advanced to the figure, and with a sudden jerk threw off the cloak which enveloped it. It was his own child.

‘So it’s *you!*’ said he, bitterly, as he turned from her. ‘And you’ve come to see your work. Look at me well. You’ve succeeded to your heart’s content.’

The girl endeavored to clasp his hand, but he flung her from him; and facing her, said: ‘What you have to say, say at once, and be gone. There is little policy in seeking me out now, for I have nothing to give.’

The girl cast herself at his feet, in a passion of grief. ‘Oh! father! dear father! I ask nothing except your forgiveness. Give me *that*, for the love of God! I ask nothing more. Do not refuse me that, as you hope for forgiveness of your own sins!’

‘There was a time,’ said Rust, ‘when I could not have resisted those tones; when I could have refused you nothing. My very heart’s blood was yours; but I am changed — changed indeed; since not a single spark of tenderness for you is left; not even the shadow of the love which I once bore to you. You are a stranger to me; or, worse than that,

you are *she* whose wanton conduct has placed me here, and to-morrow will lead me to the gallows.'

The girl rose up hastily, and said in a quick, husky voice :

'Farewell, father ; I will not stay until you curse me, for I fear it may come to that. May God forgive both you and me ! I have done wrong, and most bitterly have I suffered for it.'

She caught his hand, pressed it to her lips, which were hot as fire, and left the cell.

That was the last time that the father and daughter ever met. But was it fancy ? — did the lip of that hard man tremble, and was that a tear that he brushed from his eye, as he bent his head forward and listened to the receding footsteps of his child ?

The gaoler soon afterward brought in a light, and asked Rust if he wanted any thing ; and on being answered in the negative, went out.

The night wore on heavily. Rust heard the clock, as its iron tongue struck the successive hours from his life. At last the hour of midnight sounded. He took out his watch, wound it up, and set it.

'Your life will last longer than mine,' said he, as he held it to the light, and examined the face. He then placed it on the table, and leaning his head on his hand, contemplated it for a long time. Time was hurrying on ; for while he was sitting thus, the clock struck — one. He looked about the room ; went to the door, and listened ; then resumed his seat, and thrusting his hand in his bosom, drew out a small vial, containing a dark liquid. He held it to the light ; shook it ; smiled ; and applying it to his lips, swallowed its contents.

'I'll disappoint the sight-seers,' said he. He raised the light ; took a long and earnest survey of the room ; undressed

himself; sat on the edge of his bed for a moment, apparently in deep thought; then got into bed and drew the cover closely about him.

‘Now, then,’ said he, ‘the dream of life is past. I’ll soon know whether there is any waking from it.’

These were his last words; for when the cell was opened in the morning, he was dead in his bed. As in life, so in death, his own evil acts clashed with his interests; for at an early hour in the morning a messenger arrived with a pardon. In consideration of the heinous nature of the provocation which had led to the commission of Rust’s crime, and of the inadequate punishment inflicted by the laws for such offences, the Governor had remitted his sentence.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON the day but one after Rust's death, Mr. Kornicker was very busy in his office. His coat was off; his hat was on a chair, and in it was his snuff-box, a black silk neckcloth, and a white handkerchief, not a little discolored by the presence of snuff and the absence of water. In one corner of the room lay a confused heap, consisting of bed, bedding, and various odds and ends of wearing apparel; and from these Mr. Kornicker, after due reflection and calculation as to the order in which to make his choice, selected article after article. First, he spread upon the floor his counterpane, then his blanket, then a sheet not a little akin in appearance to his handkerchief, and then his bed: upon these he piled his apparel, in a confused heap, and proceeded to roll the whole into a large ball, which he secured with a piece of rope. 'Now then, the moving's begun,' said he, opening the door and rolling the bundle into the entry. 'The premises are ready for the next tenant.'

Having brushed his knees with the palm of his hands, and dusted his hands by knocking them together, he put on his neckcloth, coat, and hat; pocketed his snuff-box and handkerchief, walked into the entry, locked the door, put the key over it, as he had always been in the habit of doing; seated himself upon his bundle, with his back leaning against the wall; and immediately lapsed into a fit of deep abstraction, which he occasionally relieved by kicking his heels against the floor, shaking his head in a sudden and emphatic manner, or inhaling his breath rapidly and violently, producing a sound blending the qualities of a snort and a whistle.

'So,' said he, at length rousing himself from his abstraction, at the same time nodding his head at Rust's office, '*his* cake being dough, our bargain's up; and here am I, Edward Kornicker, Esquire, attorney and counsellor-at-law, a man of profound experience, severe knowledge of the world, of great capacity in various ways, though of small means—I think I may say of d——d small means—once more in the market; for sale to the highest bidder. Such a valuable commodity is not to be met with every day. If any gentleman,' continued he, raising his hand and looking around at an imaginary audience, 'is extremely desirous of securing the eminent talents of one of the most prominent young men of the day—not exactly new,' added he, running his eye over his rusty coat, 'but wonderfully serviceable; no cracks nor flaws, no pieces broken off—here is an opportunity which will not occur again. This is only a scratch on the surface,' said he, as he thrust his finger into a small hole in his coat-sleeve; 'the article itself is warranted to be perfectly sound, and of the best quality. How much is bid?—how much for the promising young man aforesaid? How much? One thousand dollars? Five hundred? Two fifty?—one?—fifty? It won't do,' said he, in a melancholy tone; 'strike him down to me. The gentleman's bought himself in; there being no demand for the article in this market, he thinks of disposing of himself to some respectable widow lady with a small family and a large purse. He may alter his mind, but that's his present intention.'

Here Mr. Kornicker concluded his rather extraordinary soliloquy by plunging his hands in his pockets, and dropping into a subdued whistle; in the course of which his thoughts seemed to have taken altogether a different channel; for it was not long before he said, as if in continuance of some unuttered train of thought:

‘Well, old fellow, I promised you to look after your girl, although you did n’t seem much struck with the offer. But I’ll stick to my promise; although, to tell the truth, I do n’t exactly know how to commence. But nothing will be done by sitting on this bundle. So I’ll to my work at once.’

He rose up hastily, and was descending the stairs, when he abruptly turned back, went up to his luggage, and after eyeing it for a minute, said :

‘It’s a hazardous business to leave you here. You can’t be distrained on, nor levied on, because you’re exempt by law. So you are safe from landlords and creditors; the law makes you exempt from being stolen too; but thieves consider themselves, like members of parliament, out of the reach of law. There’s the rub. You might be stolen; and I very much regret to say, that the gentleman who should lay violent hands on you would walk off with all my goods, chattels, lands, tenements, and hereditaments; but I’ve no where to put you, and as I expect to sleep in this entry, you must take your chance. So, good-bye, old acquaintance, in case you and I should never meet again.’

Having in a very grave manner shaken one corner of the counterpane, as if it were the hand of an old friend, he gave his head a sudden jerk, to settle his hat in the right place, and descended the stairs.

The task which Kornicker had imposed upon himself was by no means easy; but, firm in his purpose of fulfilling his promise, he shut his eyes to all difficulties, and commenced his pursuit.

The first place to which he went was the prison, for he hoped that the keeper of it might know something about her, or that she might have left her address there, in case her father wished to see her when he was imprisoned. But he was disappointed. They could tell him nothing, except that

Rust neither asked for her nor mentioned her, and had always refused to see her. She had never succeeded in gaining admittance to him, except on the night of his death, when the gaoler, a fellow unfit for his office, for he had some human feeling left, unable to resist her tears and entreaties, had let her in unannounced, as mentioned in the last chapter. She had left the cell abruptly, had hurried off, and had never returned. 'God help the poor child!' exclaimed the man as he told the story. 'Such hearts as hers were made for heaven, not for this world. I have a daughter of her age; and even if she had robbed a church, I could n't have treated her as that man treated his child.'

The man looked at Kornicker, to observe the effect of his last remark; but probably that gentleman viewed the robbing of a church in a less heinous light than the gaoler, for he made no comment on it, but after a pause said:

'So that's all you know?'

The man nodded.

'Good-morning to you, Sir,' said Kornicker; and he walked straight out of the building, and had crossed several streets before he had made up his mind what to do next. This however was soon settled, and he buttoned his coat tightly, and pulled his hat firmly on his head, drew on a pair of shabby gloves, and performed a number of those little acts which in ancient times were known under the head of 'girding up his loins,' preparatory to setting out for his next point of destination, which was the girl's former home, the place where Rust had committed the murder. It was many miles off; and the distance which Rust, under the whip and spur of fierce passions, had traversed without trace of fatigue, drew from his clerk many a sigh, and many an expression of weariness.

When he got there, he found the house deserted. He

entered it, for there was no one there to hinder it, but the rooms were empty and dismantled. The house had been hired by Rust, and no sooner was he in the gripe of the law, than creditors innumerable, who like birds of prey were biding their time, kept in check by the unbending character of their debtor, came flitting in from every quarter; seized and sold the furniture, and left the house desolate. A single dark stain upon the library floor, where the murdered man had fallen, was all that was left to tell a tale of the past. The dust had gathered thickly on the walls, as if preparing to commence a slumber of years; and as Kornicker went out, the rats scampered through the hall, startled at the tread of a stranger.

With a heart as heavy as his limbs, as he thought of the past life of the girl who had once tenanted this house, and then fancied what her present fate must be, Kornicker set out on his return. 'If it had been me,' said he, pausing to take a last look at the lonely house; 'if it had only been Edward Kornicker who was thus cast adrift, to kick his way through the world with empty pockets, and without a sou, to say to him God-speed, or 'I'm sorry for you,' it would have been right and proper, and no one would have any cause to grumble or find fault; but this being a girl, with no money, and consequently with no friends, no experience as *I* have, it's a very hard case — a very hard case, indeed.

Having arrived at this conclusion, Kornicker took off his hat, wiped his forehead, snuffed, and set out on his return.

Day after day for several weeks he prosecuted his inquiries without success; and just when he was in despair, chance led him to success. In the course of his rambles, he encountered a person who had been at Rust's trial, and happened to speak about him; for now that the criminal was dead and in his grave, when public opinion could be of no

service to him, many who had hunted him down began to view less harshly the crime which had led to his death ; and this man was one of the number. He said that, although he deserved punishment for his previous evil deeds, yet the best and purest act of his life had been that by which he had struck down the destroyer of his child.

‘Poor thing!’ said he, ‘she must have led a miserable life since her father’s death. I have met her several times since then in the street, but that was several weeks ago ; and then she was very feeble, scarcely able to walk : perhaps she’s dead now.’

Kornicker waited only long enough to ascertain that she lived in a certain out-of-the-way part of the town, which the man designated, and thither he directed his steps, and resumed his search ; and after several days spent in fruitless inquiries, he discovered her.

The house in which he found her was a small ruinous building, sagged and jutting forward, as if struggling to sustain itself against time and dilapidation. The windows were broken ; the doors and shutters unhung, except a solitary one of the latter, which creaked as it flapped to and fro in the wind ; and this was the home of Rust’s child.

Kornicker ascended the rickety stairs, and paused at the door of a room which a slipshod woman had pointed out as that of the ‘murderer’s daughter.’ He knocked, but there was no reply ; he knocked again, but all was silent. Then he opened the door and looked in.

It was a small, dingy room, unfurnished, with the exception of a bed on the floor, and a single chair, on which stood a candle whose flaring light served only to add to the gloom of the room by revealing its wretchedness. The girl was in bed ; her hair lying in tangled masses about the pillow. Her cheeks were sunken and colorless, and her eyes deep-set

and glowing, as if all that was left of life was concentrated in them.

Kornicker hesitated for a moment, and then pushed the door open and walked in. The girl looked listlessly up, but did not notice him; for she turned her head away with a weary, restless motion, and did not speak. Kornicker went to the bed, got on his knees beside it, and took her hand in his. As he did so, he observed that it was very thin and shrunken, and that the large veins stood out like cords. It was hot as fire. 'You're very ill,' said he, in a low tone. 'I'm afraid you're very ill.'

'I'm dying of thirst,' said the girl, pointing to an empty pitcher which stood on the floor. 'Give me water; the want of it is driving me mad. No one has been near me to-day. I tried to get it myself, but could not stand.'

Kornicker waited to hear no more, but seizing the pitcher, darted out to a pump, and in a very few minutes came back again with it filled to the brim. The girl's eye grew even more lustrous than before as she saw it, and she attempted to rise, but was unable.

'You must excuse ceremony,' said Kornicker, as he placed his arm under her back and supported her while he held the pitcher to her lips. 'Nursing is n't in my line.'

The girl swallowed the water greedily, and then sank back on the pillow exhausted.

'Have you a doctor?' inquired Kornicker, placing the pitcher on the floor.

'No,' answered she feebly; 'I have no money; the last went yesterday. I'm deserted by all now.'

'Not quite,' exclaimed Kornicker, slapping his hand earnestly on his knee, while he experienced a choking sensation about the throat; 'not while I'm left. I'm sorry I a'n't a woman, for your sake; but as I do n't happen to be, I hope

you'll make no objections on that score; I'll look after you as if you were my own sister.'

It was the first word of kindness that the girl had heard for a long time, and the tears came in her eyes.

'There, there, don't cry,' said Kornicker. 'It bothers me; I don't know what to do when women cry. But you have n't a doctor; that will never do. Keep up your heart,' said he, rising; 'I'll return presently.' Saying this, and without waiting for a reply, he left the room.

Arriving in the street, his first impulse was not only to feel in his pockets, but with the utmost care to turn them inside out, and to examine them narrowly.

'Not a copper — pockets to let!' said he, restoring them to their former condition, after a long and unsuccessful search. 'But this girl must be looked after; that's settled. Now then,' said he, in a very meditative mood, 'who's able to do it, and *will*?'

This seemed a question not easily answered, for he stood for more than a minute in profound thought, in endeavoring to solve it; but apparently making up his mind, he hurried along the street. The direction which he took was toward the upper part of the city, and he was some time in reaching his destination, which was no other than Harry Harson's house. He crossed the court-yard and knocked at the door, which was opened by Harson.

'I want a word with you,' said Kornicker, abruptly.

Harson told him to come in; led the way to his sitting-room, and pointing to a chair, told him to be seated.

'I have n't time,' said Kornicker, shaking his head. 'Do you know me?'

'I've seen you, but I can't recollect where.'

'*Here*,' said Kornicker, 'here, in this room. I breakfasted here. I'm Michael Rust's clerk.'

'Then you can scarcely expect a cordial reception from me,' said Harson, coldly.

'I don't care what sort of a reception you give me,' replied Kornicker; 'you may kick me, if it will be any comfort to you, provided you only do what I ask. Michael Rust is dead, and his daughter is now dying, with scarcely clothes to cover her, or a bed to lie in; without a cent to buy her food or medicine; without a soul to say a single word of comfort to her. I would n't have troubled you, old fellow,' continued he, with some warmth, at the same time turning out his pockets, 'if I had a cent to give her. The last I had I spent in getting a breakfast this morning; and although it's the only meal I've eaten to-day, damme if I would have touched it if I had thought to have found her in such circumstances. But since you won't help her, you may let it alone; I'm not so hard run but that I can do something for her yet.'

Kornicker had worked himself up into such an excitement, owing to Harson's cold reception of him, that he took it for granted his request was to be refused; and having thus vented his feelings, he turned on his heel to go, when the old man laid his hand on his shoulder.

'Nature puts noble hearts in very rough cases,' said Harson, his eyes glistening as he spoke. 'You're a good fellow, but rather hasty. I did n't say I would not assist the poor girl; on the contrary, you shall see that I will. She has no doctor?'

'No.'

'No nurse?'

'No.'

Harson rang the bell. The housekeeper answered it.

'Martha, put on your hat and cloak,' said Harson; 'I want you to sit up with a sick person to-night. Bring a basket,

and lights, and cups, and every thing that's necessary for one who has nothing. I'll return in five minutes; you must be ready by that time. Now then, Sir, come along.'

He went into the street, and walked rapidly on, turning one or two corners, but without going far, and at last knocked at the door of a small house.

'A very excellent fellow lives here,' said he to Kornicker; 'he's a doctor; and if this girl can be saved, he'll do it. Hark! there he comes. I hear his step.'

The door was opened by the Doctor himself, and a few words sufficed to explain matters to him.

'I'll be ready in a minute,' said he, darting into the house and as suddenly returning, struggling his way into the arms of a great-coat. 'Now then,' exclaimed he, buttoning a single button, and dashing into the street, 'which way?'

'Where does she live?' asked Harson. 'I'll go back and bring the nurse.'

Kornicker told him, and was hurrying off, when Harson touched his arm, and leading him a few steps aside, said in a low voice: 'You seem somewhat straitened for money, Mr. Kornicker; I wish you would accept a loan from me.' He extended a bank-note to him.

Kornicker buttoned his pockets up very closely, not omitting a single button, and then replied coldly: 'I ask charity for others, not for myself.'

'Come, come,' said Harson kindly, 'you mustn't bear malice. I did not act well toward you at first; you must forget it; and to show that you do so, you must take this loan from me.'

'I do n't wish to borrow,' replied Kornicker.

'Well, I'm sorry for it,' said Harson, taking his hand; 'but you're not angry?'

‘No, no, old fellow ; it’s not an easy matter to keep angry with you ; you’re a trump !’

‘Perhaps you’ll sup with me when we return ?’ said the old man, earnestly.

‘I’ll see how the girl is,’ replied Kornicker ; ‘good-bye. We’re losing time.’

Saying this, he shook hands with Harrison, and joining the Doctor, they set out at a rapid pace for the girl’s abode.

They reached it without interruption, other than a short delay on the part of the Doctor, who, being of a belligerent disposition, was desirous of stopping to flog a man who had intentionally jostled him off the side-walk. Kornicker, however, by urging upon him the situation of the girl, had induced him to postpone his purpose, not a little to the relief of the offender, who in insulting him had intended to insult only an inoffensive elderly person, who could not resent the affront.

‘Can it be possible that any thing human tenants such a den as this ?’ said the Doctor, looking at the half-hung door of the girl’s abode, and listening to the wind as it sighed through broken window-panes and along the hall.

‘Come on, and you’ll see,’ replied Kornicker ; and seizing him by the arm, he led him half-stumbling up the stairs, and finally paused at the girl’s room.

‘Look in there, if you want to see comfort,’ said he, with an irony that seemed almost savage, from the laugh which accompanied it. ‘Is n’t that a sweet sick-chamber for one who all her life has had every thing that money could buy ?’

The Doctor glanced in the room, then at the fierce, excited face of his companion. ‘Come, come,’ said he, in a kind tone, taking Kornicker’s hand ; ‘do n’t give way to these feelings. She’ll be well taken care of now. Harry Harrison never does a good action by halves. Come in.’

He pushed the door open very gently, and went to the bed. The girl seemed sleeping, for she did not move. He took the candle, and held it so that the light fell on her face. He then placed his hand gently upon her wrist. He kept it there for some moments, then held up the light again, and looked at her face; after which he placed it on the floor, rose up, and took a long survey of the room.

‘It’s a wretched place,’ said he, speaking in a whisper. ‘She must have suffered terribly here.’

‘This is the way the poor live,’ said Kornicker, in a low, bitter tone; ‘this is the way *she* has lived; but we’ll save her from dying so.’

The Doctor looked at him, and then turned away and bit his lip.

‘What are you going to do for her?’ demanded Kornicker, after a pause: ‘have you medicine with you?’

‘She requires nothing now,’ said the Doctor, in a tone scarcely above a whisper. ‘She’s dead!’

Kornicker hastily took the light, and bent over her. He remained thus for a long time; and when he rose, his eyes were filled with tears.

‘I’m sorry I left her,’ said he, in a vain effort to speak in his usual tones. ‘It was very hard that she should die alone. I acted for the best; but d — n it, I’m always wrong!’

He dashed his fist across his face, walked to the window, and looked out.

At that moment the door opened, and Harson entered, his face somewhat attempered in its joyous expression; and close behind followed the housekeeper with a large basket.

‘How is she?’ asked he, in a subdued tone.

Kornicker made no reply, but looked resolutely out of the window, and snuffed profusely. It would not have been

manly to show that the large tears were coursing down his cheeks. Harson threw an inquiring glance at the Doctor who answered by a shake of the head : 'She was dead when we got here.'

Harson went to the bed, and put back the long tresses from her face. There was much in that face to sadden the old man's heart. Had it been that of an old person, of one who had lived out her time, and had been gathered in in due season, he would have thought less of it; but it was sad indeed to see one in the first blush of youth, scarcely more than a child, stricken down and dying in such a place, and so desolate.

'Was there no one with her — not a soul?' inquired Harson, earnestly, as he rose; 'not one human being, to breathe a word of comfort in her ear, or to whisper a kind word to cheer her on her long journey?'

The Doctor shook his head : 'No one.' Harson's lips quivered, but he pressed them tightly together, and turning to Kornicker, said :

'Come, my good fellow, you must struggle against your feelings; you must not be downcast about it. She's better off than if she had lived — much better off.'

'I'm not in the least downcast,' replied Kornicker, in a very resolute manner; 'I don't care a straw about it. She was nothing to me; only it's a little disagreeable to be living in this world without a soul to care for, or a soul that cares for you; and then there was some satisfaction in being of use to some one, and in feeling it was your duty to see that no one imposed on her or ill-treated her. But no matter; it's all over now. I suppose it's all right; and I feel quite cheerful, I assure you. But you'll look to her, will you? I can be of no farther use here, and I'd rather go.'

‘I will,’ said Harson.

‘You won’t let her be buried as a pauper, I hope?’

‘No, upon my honor, she shall not,’ replied Harry.

‘Very well — good-night.’

Harson followed him down the stairs, and again endeavored to force a sum of money upon him ; but Kornicker was resolute in his refusal, nor could he be induced to go home with Harson that evening. He said that he was not hungry.

After several ineffectual efforts, the old man permitted him to depart, with the internal resolution of keeping his eye on him, and of giving him a helping hand in the world ; a resolution which we may as well mention that he carried out ; so that in a few years Mr. Kornicker became a very vivacious gentleman, of independent property, who frequented a small ale-house in a retired corner of the city, where he snuffed prodigally, and became a perfect oracle, and of much reputed knowledge, from the sagacious manner in which he shook his head and winked on all subjects.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was a clear, cloudless night, and the stars twinkled and glistened as if the sky were full of bright eyes, looking gladly down upon the world, and taking a share in all its gayety and happiness. There was no moon, or rather the moon was a reveller, and kept late hours, and might be detected skulking through the sky at about one or two in the morning, when she should have been abed; and in consequence of her neglect of duty, the streets were dark, except where here and there the shop windows threw out bright streams of light, revealing now a wrinkled brow, now a fat, jolly face, and now a pair of bright sparkling eyes, glowing cheeks, and lips like a rose-bud, as the throng of people flitted past them; for an instant clear, distinct, with face, feature, and form plainly visible, and then lost in the darkness. Some paused to look in the windows, some to chat; and it might have been observed, that those who lingered longest in the light were young, and such whose faces could bear both the test of light and scrutiny. But amid that crowd was a single man, who followed the same course as the rest; skulking in the dark corners, darting rapidly across the streams of light, with his head bent down and his hat slouched, as if he desired to avoid notice. When he reached those places which were comparatively less thronged, he paused and leaned against the iron railings of the houses, and more than once turned and retraced his steps, as if he had changed or mistaken his route. He was, as far as could be judged from the sudden and uncertain glimpses

afforded of his person, tall and gaunt, with sunken eyes, long, unshorn beard, and a face disfigured by a deep gash. He had the appearance of one broken down by ill health or suffering, and his panting breath, as he stopped, showed that he was taxing his strength by the pace at which he went. Although he paused often, and often turned back, yet in the end he resumed his journey, and finally reached the upper part of the city. There he struck into a dark cross-street. Once free from the crowd, and where few could observe him, his smothered feelings broke out; and muttering to himself, grating his teeth, blaspheming, now striking his clenched fists as if aiming a blow, he darted on. He did not pause until he came to the house of no less a person than Harry Harson. He crossed the door-yard hastily, as if he feared his resolution might give way; opened the front door—for Harry had no enemies, and his door was unbolted—and entered the outer room. The door communicating with the inner room was open, so that he could see within; and, perhaps, never was there a greater contrast than between the occupants of those two rooms. In one was a man eaten up by fierce passions, desperate and hardened, with all that is noble in the human soul burnt out as with a hot iron; in the other sat an old man whose benevolent features beamed with good-will to all mankind. There was scarcely a wrinkle in the broad, full brow; the hair was sprinkled with gray; but what of that? His eye was bright; and his heart—God bless thee, old Harry Harson! what need to speak of thy heart?

The intruder had come in so noiselessly, although his motions were rapid and bold, that Harson had not heard him, but sat reading a newspaper, and was not a little startled in looking over it to see a man seated within a few

feet of him, and gazing at him with eyes as wild and bright as those of a maniac.

‘Who are you, in the name of Heaven?’ ejaculated he, too surprised even to rise, and looking at the stranger as if he still doubted the reality of his being in that spot.

The man laughed savagely: ‘Look at me, my master; look at me *well*; you’ve see me afore. Try and recollect it.’

Harson’s embarrassment was not of long duration, and he examined the man from head to foot. A vague recollection of having met him some where, mingled with an indefinable feeling of suspicion and pain, crossed Harson’s mind as he studied the sunken features which were submitted unshrinkingly to his scrutiny. He thought, and pondered, and wondered; and still the man remained unmoved. He looked again; the man changed his position, and the light fell upon him from another direction. Harson knew him at once. He started up: ‘Murderer, I know you!’

The man was on his feet at the same moment.

‘Down to your seat, Sir!’ said he, in a loud, savage tone. ‘You’re right; but you cannot take me alive, nor will mortal man. In that room,’ said he, in a low tone, and pointing toward the dark stair-case which led to the upper part of the house, ‘I killed Tim Craig — the only man that ever loved me. He’s been after me ever since!’ He leaned his face toward Harson, and looking stealthily over his shoulder, said, in a whisper: ‘He’s waiting for me at the door. He sat down on the steps when I came in. I do n’t know why I came here, but *he* made me do it, and I must see where I killed him. It was n’t me. It was Rust; it was Rust. Hark!’ He cast a hasty glance in the room behind him. ‘I’m going, Tim,’ said he. ‘Quick! quick! give me the light!’

Seizing the candle, before Harson could prevent him, he rushed out of the room, and sprang up the stairs two at a time. Harson followed; but before he reached the door of the upper room, with a yell so loud and unearthly that it made the old man's heart stand still, the murderer darted out; his face livid, his hair bristling, his eyes starting with horror. With a single bound he cleared the stairs; crossed the antechamber; the gate swung shut heavily, and he was gone! And this was the last that was ever known of Bill Jones. A few months afterward, the body of a man was found floating in one of the docks, and was supposed to be his; but it was so mutilated and disfigured, that it was impossible to ascertain the fact with any certainty, and it was deposited in the earth, with none to claim it or care for it, and with no mark to designate that the soil above it shrouded a heart which had once throbbed with all the hopes and fears and passions that were burning in the bosoms of those who were carelessly loitering above its resting-place.

CHAPTER XXX.

NED SOMERS had followed Harson's advice in not making his visits to Rhoneland's too frequent. But whatever may have passed between him and Kate, and even if they did occasionally meet in the street and stop to speak, and sometimes to hold conversations which were neither short nor uninteresting to themselves, that is a matter between themselves, with which we have nothing to do. Certain it is, however, that as Ned cooled off in his intimacy with Rhoneland, he appeared to rise in the old man's estimation; and he grew more cordial when they *did* meet. It may have been that the suspicions implanted by Rust were gradually giving way before the frank, honest nature of the young man; or it may have been that gratitude for the assistance which Somers had lent (and which Harson was very particular to give its full weight) in disentangling him from the toils of Rust; or it may have been the secret influence of Harson, who ventured, whenever it could be done, to speak a good word for Ned; or it may have been the drooping face of his child, which he was wont more than ever to study anxiously, that gradually softened his feelings; but there is no doubt that, to Kate's surprise, he one day told her to get him pen, ink, and paper, and to draw the table in front of him, as he was going to write a letter. And it must be confessed that Kate's color heightened and her heart beat fast when he had finished the letter, directed it to Mr. Edward Somers, and then asked if she knew the address of Somers, which of course she did; although she

hesitated and stammered as if the answer were the most difficult thing in the world.

But her surprise was scarcely greater than that of Ned himself, when a boy came to him with a letter which ran thus :

‘MY DEAR EDWARD : Come to me as soon as you can ; I wish to see you on a matter of much importance to both of us.

‘Yours truly,

JACOB RHONELAND.’

Ned felt something bouncing about in a very queer manner directly under his ribs, as he read this note ; but the sensation was not so painful as to prevent his obeying it with a speed that was perfectly marvellous ; for to Rhoneland it seemed that the letter could scarcely have reached its destination before Ned was back with it in his hand.

‘You got my note,’ said he gravely, as Somers entered, his face flushed with the rapidity with which he had come.

‘I have.’

‘Do n’t go, Kate,’ said he to his daughter, who, with an inkling of what was to follow, was stealing away. ‘What I have to say relates to both of you.’

‘Some time since,’ said he, rising and standing in front of Ned, ‘I wronged you, by making charges against you which I am now convinced were false. My mind was poisoned by one who has gone to his long account, and whose evil deeds may sleep with him. For this,’ said he, extending his hand, ‘I ask your pardon ; much more frankly and freely than I did on the day when we met at Mr. Harson’s.’

Ned took the proffered hand ; at the same time pouring out a confusion of words, the substance of which was, that he had taken no offence ; that he knew Jacob was misled by others ; that he was not only perfectly willing, but very

happy, to make up the matter, and say no more about it; which no doubt was very true, for within six feet of him stood Kate, with her soft eyes fixed on his face, and her little mouth dimpled with smiles, as she observed how swimmingly matters were going on. And could he be crusty and dogged? or could he cherish a grudge against *her* father? The thing was impossible. The extended hand was grasped, and grasped warmly.

‘Another thing I have to speak of,’ said Rhoneland, relaxing somewhat at the cordial tone of Ned’s feelings. ‘It is but a short time since I learned the full extent of my obligations to you, for the part you took in unmasking the character of Rust, which led to a disavowal of his charges against me, which, false as they were, were hard indeed to bear, and were breaking me down. I have not finished,’ said he, raising his hand to prevent the interruption which Somers was endeavoring to make; ‘let me complete what I have to say, and you may speak as much as you like, afterwards. I will not thank you, for thanks are but words, and too often mean nothing. Is there any thing that I can *do*, to lessen my indebtedness to you? or is there any way in which I can pay it off altogether?’

He stopped, and looked earnestly in Ned’s face. The red blood dashed up to Somers’ very forehead, and he could scarcely breathe for the thumping of his heart, as the idea crossed him that now was the time to ask for Kate; nor was his agitation at all diminished by casting a glance at her, and seeing her cheeks crimson and her eyes downcast, as if she anticipated what was going on in his mind. It must be confessed, however, that had Rhoneland had no other clue to his wishes than that afforded by his words, he would have been very much in the dark; for although Ned attempted to speak out boldly, his lips trembled very much, and his voice

was not as obedient as he could have wished ; and all that was distinctly audible was the girl's name.

'Why, lad, what ails thee?' asked Rhoneland, unbending, as he observed the embarrassment of his guest. 'You used to be as bold as a lion. Come here, Kate,' said he to his daughter ; 'this young fellow has lost his voice ; can *you* tell me what he wants?'

It was now Kate's turn to grow confused, and the color to deepen on her cheek ; nor did she utter a word.

'Young man,' continued Rhoneland, in a grave tone, 'I did not send for you to trifle with your feelings. You love my daughter, and would ask for *her*, and you fear to do so, lest the request should be refused. She is yours. Treat her kindly, and keep even a shadow of sorrow from falling upon her brow. If you do not, an old man's curse will rest upon you ; and even though I be dead, and mouldering in my grave, where my voice cannot reach you, that silent curse will follow you.' He turned abruptly away, and left the room.

Ned Somers took Kate's hand in his ; passed his arm about her waist, and drew her to him in so singular a manner that their lips could not but meet ; and not only once, but at least some half a dozen times.

'So you're mine at last, Kate!' said he, looking into her very eyes, whenever they were raised enough for him to do so. 'Did I not tell you to cheer up ; and that all would be well ? Did I not say so ; and was n't I right ? And now, Kate,' said he, in a less confident tone, 'your father, though a most worthy old gentleman, is somewhat whimsical, and might change his mind ; so when shall *it* be?'

Kate's reply was so very low, that it reached no ears except those of Ned ; but whatever it was, it is certain that on that day month they had been married a week, and were

deep in preparations for a merry-making to be held on that very evening at Rhoneland's old house, which had been so furbished up and renovated, under the auspices of the young couple, that every thing in it seemed to shine again. A party at Jacob Rhoneland's ! It was a thing unheard-of, and produced quite a sensation in the drowsy part of the town where he lived. Never had a household been in such a fluster as his was. What deep consultations were held to prevent the old man—who seemed to have grown quite cheerful and light-hearted, and chirruped about the house like some gay old cricket—from meddling in every thing, and to throw dust in his eyes, so as to make him suppose that he was having every thing in his own way, when in fact he was having nothing. And then what a time it took, and what entreaties, to prevail on him to let the great wooden chest, studded with brass nails, which he never took his eye from, be removed to an upper chamber, to make room for their guests ! But Harry Harson, who was in the thick of all the doings, and in and out a dozen times in an hour ; rubbing his hands and enjoying the bustle, giving advice, suggesting this thing and that, and setting every thing wrong ; managed to get the great chest out of the way, for he dragged it up stairs under Rhoneland's very nose, and in the teeth of his remonstrances ; and depositing it in a little out-of-the-way room, very difficult of access, by reason of the angles and turns in the entry, and the size of the chest, told Rhoneland that if he wanted it below he might take it there himself ; but that it was better where it was, and much more safe and out of the way ; in which opinion Rhoneland finally coincided.

Betimes Kate came down stairs to receive her guests, looking so charmingly, and her eyes flashing with such malicious brightness, that on meeting her in the entry, Ned stopped

to kiss her, and tell her that she was looking 'gloriously;' a performance and observation, by the way, which he had already repeated half a dozen times in the course of the last hour. By twos and threes the guests began to arrive, and went up stairs. There was a great clatter above, where they were taking off their things. It took a wonderful time to remove the hats and shawls; for although for a long time up they went, none came down. There must have been thirty assembled above stairs. At last Harry Harrison, who was in the room with Ned and Kate, dressed in his best black suit, and looking as young and merry as any of them, vowed that he would not stand it, and sallied up stairs and sent them down in a drove. How bright and cheerful they all were! how the congratulations poured in upon Ned and Kate; and hopes for his future happiness, and that he might have a large fortune, and a large family to help him take care of it!

A loud scraping and jingling announced that the music was there, and put a stop to such flummery as conversation. The young folks were going into the business of the evening. Clem, the little stunted black fiddler with rings in his ears, was mounted on one chair; the big, fat fiddler, who fiddled with his eyes shut, was seated on another; and the goggle-eyed negro, with a self-satisfied face, who simpered on every body, and flourished the tambourine, was placed like an umbrella in the corner, to be out of the way.

The fat fiddler called out for the gentlemen to choose their partners for a quadrille. Then came the long premonitory screeching of the fiddle-bow across the cat-gut; then the slight, tremulous jingle of the tambourine, as if the goggle-eyed negro were dying to begin; then the bustling and hustling, and squeezing of the couples, until they had obtained their places in the dance. Then the scientific look

of the fat fiddler as he opened his eyes and surveyed the whole, to see that all was right; then the slight clearing of his throat, as he threw his head on one side, bellowed out 'right and left,' and forthwith plunged into the matter, might and main. Away he went; but fast and furious at his heels followed the little stunted fiddler; and loud above the din of both, rose the rattle of the tambourine. 'Right hand across! forward two; balancez; ladies' chain; forward four; dos-à-doz; chassez to the right; cross over; all round;' here, there, every where, and all over — he was up to it all. In vain the dancers fairly flew; the fat fiddler was equal to all emergencies; he never lagged; he was sometimes too fast, but never — no, not for a single instant — was he too slow.

'Whew!' said he, as he gave the final flourish of his bow, and laying it aside, wiped his forehead on his coat-sleeve, and called for a tumbler of cold water. And thereupon the stunted fiddler and the tambourine made the same request; the latter suggesting that his glass might be tempered with a 'small spirt of gin,' without hurting his feelings.

In that dance, the lightest step and merriest voice was that of Harson, who led out the bride, and footed it there with the best of them; and who through the whole evening was bustling around the room, with a kind word for every one, and as much at home as if the house, and the company, and even the bride, belonged to him. And in fact, one or two of the guests — but they were unsophisticated people from the country — were for some time under the delusion that Harry was the bridegroom, instead of the quiet young fellow who was seen walking about the rooms, talking to the disagreeable old women, and getting partners for the ugly young ones, without their knowing it; but all in such an unobtrusive manner that he seemed quite a nobody when compared with Harson.

But there must be an end even to the merriest meetings ; and when they had kept it up until the night had got among the small hours, they began to drop off. And here, amid the adieus of departing guests, we will take our leave of the young couple ; for it is far pleasanter to bid farewell to those whose friendship we have cherished when hope is strong and bright, than when care or disappointment has flung its shadow over their hearts.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

A FEW weeks had elapsed, and a small group was gathered one evening at Harrison's fireside. It was composed of three persons beside Harrison. The first was a man of about fifty; he might have been younger; for the heavy wrinkles which were scored across his forehead may have been the fruit of trouble and care, for they were almost too deep for his years; his mouth was firmly compressed, like that of one in the habit of mastering strong feelings; and the whole character of his face would have been stern, but for his dark-gray eye, which at times brightened up almost to childish playfulness. This was Mr. Colton, the father of Harrison's protégé, Annie. The child herself was seated on Harrison's knee, sound asleep, with her head resting on his breast. The only other person in the group was the wife of Mr. Colton. She was quite young, and had once possessed great beauty — the beauty of youth and happiness; but that was gone, and in its place was the patient look of one who had suffered much, and in silence. She spoke seldom, and in a low tone, so soft and musical that one regretted when the voice ceased.

'Your letter,' said Mr. Colton, in continuation of a previous conversation, 'put an end to all my plans respecting my poor niece. I had hoped to assist her; for, knowing her father's hostility to her, I feared that she might be in want. Her death was a very melancholy one.'

He looked in the fire in deep thought, and for a short time a silence ensued which no one seemed inclined to break.

‘I never saw her,’ said his wife, after some moments; ‘I think *you* did.’

‘Yes, once — at the trial,’ replied he, uttering the last words with an effort, as if the subject were painful. ‘She was very beautiful.’

‘Did she resemble her father?’ inquired Mrs. Colton.

‘Perhaps I can settle that question more easily than any one,’ said Harson, rising up, ‘by letting you judge for yourself.’

He went to a small curtain which hung against the wall, and drawing it aside, disclosed a portrait of Rust’s daughter — the same which Rust had brooded over with such mingled emotions on the night previous to the murder. The same childlike, innocent smile, played round the small, dimpled mouth; the same calm, thoughtful expression of intellect mingled with gentleness, shone out of the eyes. All was as it was when father and child last looked upon it — the criminal and her accuser. Every line was unaltered; but where were they? Dust! They had acted their part on earth; their love, their hate, their fears, their remorse, were past. The tide of time was hurrying on, bringing life and death and hopes and fears to others, but sweeping from the earth all trace of their footsteps. To them for ever, ay, even until the last trump, time and thought, and care and feeling, had no existence!

Mrs. Colton’s eyes filled with tears as she gazed upon the picture. ‘She deserved a happier fate,’ said she, in a subdued tone, as if she feared to disturb the spell which seemed to hang about it.

‘It was ordained for the best,’ replied Harson, in a grave tone, as he regarded the portrait with a solemn interest. Then, after a moment, he added: ‘That *was* she, before want and suffering had laid their iron finger upon her.

When I saw her, she was dead. She was very beautiful even then; but in the short time that had elapsed since her father's imprisonment, the work of years had been performed; she seemed much older and thinner, and more care-worn.'

'How did you get this?' inquired Mr. Colton, pointing to the picture.

'A friend of mine, the person who aided the girl in her last moments, accidentally learned that it was for sale, and begged me to buy it. He was too poor to do it, and I was willing to gratify him; and so the picture became mine.'

Mr. Colton looked at him for a few moments, as if on the point of making some remark, and then walked to the other end of the room and took a seat without a word. He was aroused by the child climbing on his knee, and putting her arms about his neck.

'God protect you, my child!' said he, laying his hand affectionately on her head; 'may you never know the misery which has fallen upon that poor girl!'

The words were intended to be inaudible, but they reached the ear of his wife, who, going up to him, and laying her hand on his arm, said in a low voice: 'Come, come, George, do not give way to these feelings. You must not be gloomy.'

He looked at her sadly, and then placing his finger on his heart, said: 'Is not what has been going on here, for years, enough to wither to the root every feeling of cheerfulness, so that it should never again put forth a blossom?'

'Hush! hush!' interrupted his wife, in a whisper; 'if you *have* suffered, you have gained at last what you have always prayed for; while *he*, who caused it all, has paid the penalty of his misdeeds. Remember what his fate was.' She pointed to the picture: 'Remember, too, the fate of his

only child. 'George, George! his punishment has been terrible, even in *this* world!'

'You are right, Mary — God forgive me! I'll think of it no more. *He* and I were nursed in the same arms, and watched by the same fond mother. From the bottom of my heart I forgive him. It would be sacrilege to her memory, for me to harbor an unkind feeling toward even a stranger, if she had loved him.'

He was silent for a moment, and then addressing Harson, inquired :

'Who is this Mr. Kornicker?'

'A poor fellow, with little to help him through the world but careless habits and a good heart.'

'What character does he bear?' inquired the other.

'Such as might be expected from his position,' replied Harson; 'full of flaws, but with a vein of gold running through it. Nature has given him fine feelings, and Fortune unluckily, has placed him in a situation where such feelings are impediments rather than otherwise. But he is a noble fellow for all that.'

'Where can he be found?' asked his guest.

Harson probably anticipated the object of this inquiry, for he said with a laugh :

'He has been taken care of; he has been placed where the means of livelihood and competence are in his grasp, if he will but work for them. And what is better yet, he seems disposed to do so, although not much can be expected of him at first. I do not think,' added he, 'that it contributes to the happiness of a young man, with a long life before him, to be altogether idle. I will do all that I can to help him; but he must work. It will be more easy for him as he gets used to the traces.'

The stranger acquiesced in this remark, and then added :

'I will take his address, nevertheless, for I must see him when I return to the city, which will be very shortly ; but you seem to have anticipated me in every thing. Even the lawyer, Mr. Holmes, declined to be paid for his services. He said that *this* was not strictly a business matter, and that what he had done was out of friendship for you, and that I had better pocket the fee and drop the subject ; at the same time, he said he was going to dinner, and asked me to join him, which I did, and a very pleasant time we had of it.'

A good-natured laugh was indulged at the peculiarities of the old lawyer, and many stories told of him, and of others who have figured in this history. Nor was it until the little clock over the mantel-piece seemed to give a very vehement wag of its pendulum as it struck twelve, and Spite, who had been asleep in the corner, bounced up, alarmed at the lateness of the night, and barked vociferously, that they dreamed of going to bed.

The strangers were Harson's guests that night ; and the old man, having escorted them to their room, and wished them good-night, was himself soon in bed and asleep.

Bright and early the next morning, they were astir ; for they were to leave the city, and Harson was up and ready to see them off. It was a fine morning ; the trees were just beginning to put forth their spring leaves, and the grass in the public squares was looking quite fresh and green, as they drove down to the wharf where the steamer lay, whizzing and puffing, and groaning as if in mortal pain, and tugging at its cable like some shackled sea-monster struggling to escape to its home in the deep. Early as it was, crowds were hurrying to and fro ; carts driving up and unloading ; porters staggering along with trunks and bales on their shoulders ; carriages dashing up at a gallop, filled with people afraid of being too late, and going off more leisurely

After the passengers were deposited on the wharf. People were bustling hither and thither, elbowing their way to one place, merely to find out where to elbow it to the next; friends were bidding each other adieu; and in particular, a stout lady from the country, in yellow ribbons, from the upper part of the boat was sending a confidential message to her family and friends by a gentleman who stood in the crowd some sixty yards off.

Through this throng the coach containing our friends drove, and just in good time, for as they stepped on board, the last bell rang.

‘All aboard!’ shouted the captain; ‘take in the plank.’

Harrison shook hands with his friends. ‘God bless thee, my child!’ said he, pressing Annie in his arms. The next moment he stepped on shore; and the boat glided from the dock, and shot out upon the green water.

‘Ah, Annie!’ said the old man, as he stopped waving his hand, and turned away from the river, ‘I had hoped that you would have been mine own as long as I lived; but it’s all right as it is. Your brother,’ added he, ‘I did not miss much, when his parents took him, but *you* had become a part of my home. Well, well!’

No doubt there was a great deal of hidden consolation in these last words; for Harrison’s face soon recovered its usual cheerful character, and he steadily trudged toward his home.

A few words respecting the other characters, and our task is ended.

Grosket was induced by Mr. Colton to remove to the country, where an intercourse with different and better men than those with whom he had hitherto associated, tended in a great measure to soften his character and temper his fierce passions — the offspring of persecution and suffering.

Mrs. Blossom, at first alarmed by the fear of the law, grew

penitent and rigorous in the discharge of her moral obligations to society ; but the law being a notorious sleepy-head, and never appearing to have its eyes open, she gradually fell into her old habits, reöpened her 'seminary for lambs ;' and from the great quantity of her disciples which frequent the thoroughfares of the city at present, I should judge is getting along prosperously. Mr. Snork was extremely desirous of becoming a partner in the concern, and made several overtures to that effect, which might have been accepted by the lady, had he not objected to being deprived of his eye-sight, and seated at a corner to receive pennies from passers-by. It was in vain that the lady represented to him that this would be the making of their respective fortunes ; that blind beggars, particularly if they were remarkably disgusting, as was the case with him, had been known to retire with handsome fortunes, and that some of them even bought snug little farms in the country, and kept a horse and 'shay.' Mr. Snork, however, was obstinate ; his proposals were accordingly rejected, and he returned disconsolately to his abode, which was now lonely, his wife having paid a visit to the penitentiary, for the benefit of the country air.

The widow, Mrs. Chowles, still lives in her quiet, blinking little house, as cheerful and contented as ever ; as happy as ever to hear Harry's heavy step, and to see his honest face in his old corner in her parlor ; and although he is no longer accompanied by Spite, who has grown old and rheumatic, so that he is unable to stir from the chimney-corner, where he passes his time in crabbed solitude, except when he turns up his dim eyes to his old master, as he hears his voice, and feels his caressing hand on his head ; all else is as it was in that little household ; and that it may long continue is our warmest wish.

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